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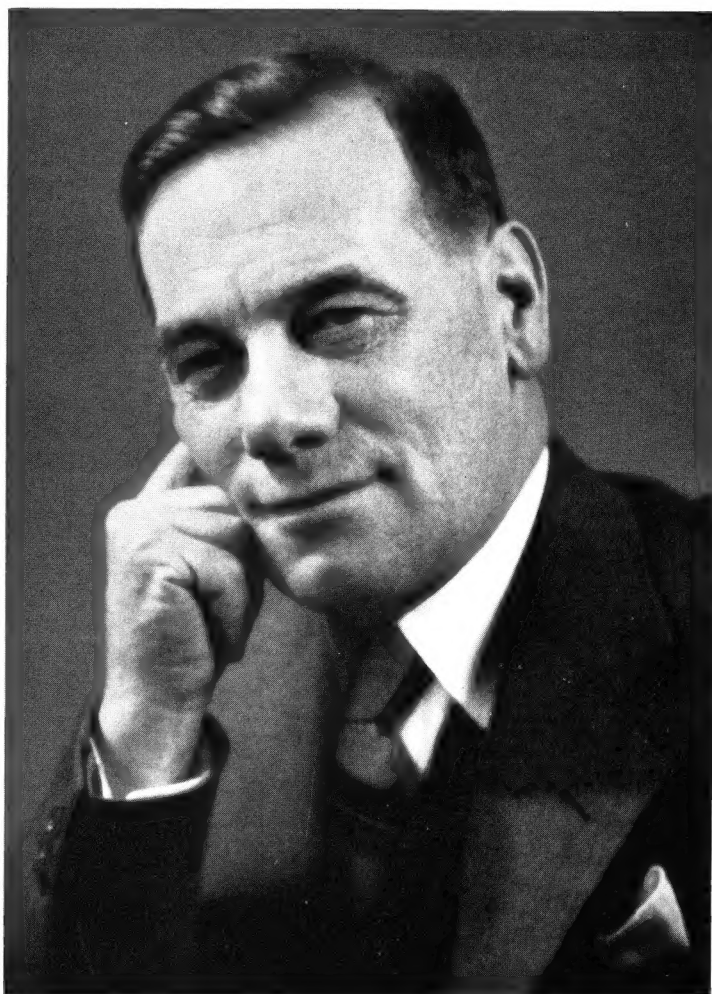




NEVER A DULL MOMENT







*Photo by Nicholas Morant*

HARRY STRANGE TODAY

# NEVER A DULL MOMENT

*By*

HARRY AND KATHLEEN STRANGE

"Home is the chief school of human virtues."

—CHANNING.

"The world is a great book, of which they that never stir from home  
read only a page."—ST. AUGUSTINE.

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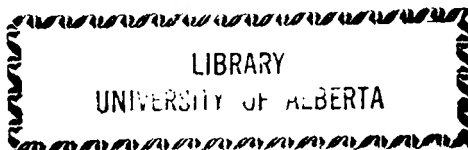
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## FOREWORD

THIS book is the result of the requests of two people—one of them the late Dr. James Boyle, Doctor of Philosophy, and for many years Professor of Rural Economy at Cornell University, New York; the other, our very dear and highly-valued friend, the late Dr. W. T. Allison, formerly of the Department of English, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada.

These two gentlemen had been urging for some years that the following yarns be collected together, arranged in chronological order, and presented in the form of a book.

It was with enthusiasm and pleasure that I undertook the task of trying to commit the stories to the printed page. I have set them down as nearly as possible in my husband's own words. Truth, it seems to me, in this case puts fiction to shame.

Although I myself come into the narrative only towards the end of the book, I have lived the entire story through many, many times. Indeed, it seems to me sometimes that I have been walking by the author's side, not only during the twenty-two years of our marriage, but ever since he was a little boy. It has been an experience with never a dull moment from start to finish.

If the story proves as interesting to you in the reading, dear friends, as it has proved to me in the

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writing, then my labour has not been in vain. My husband, in turn, hopes that not only will this book prove interesting but that, in particular, it may be found to be a small contribution to the advancement of international good will.

KATHLEEN STRANGE.

Winnipeg.

April, 1941.

## CONTENTS

| Chapter |                                                    | Page |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|------|
| I.      | EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND -                         | 1    |
| II.     | SCHOOLDAYS IN FRANCE - -                           | 14   |
| III.    | FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE - - -                          | 22   |
| IV.     | APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING -                       | 34   |
| V.      | NORTH OF ENGLAND LIFE - -                          | 46   |
| VI.     | THE BOER WAR - - - -                               | 56   |
| VII.    | OFF TO THE KLONDIKE - - -                          | 65   |
| VIII.   | GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK                        | 73   |
| IX.     | DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH - -                        | 88   |
| X.      | KLONDIKE CHARACTERS - -                            | 104  |
| XI.     | THE COURT COMES UP NORTH -                         | 117  |
| XII.    | I GO "OUTSIDE" AGAIN - -                           | 128  |
| XIII.   | ARRIVAL IN HONOLULU - - -                          | 139  |
| XIV.    | I MEET JACK LONDON FOR THE<br>FIRST TIME - - - -   | 149  |
| XV.     | MANAGING THE HONOLULU GAS<br>COMPANY - - - -       | 156  |
| XVI.    | HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS                      | 167  |
| XVII.   | EXPLORING THE ISLANDS - -                          | 181  |
| XVIII.  | THE JACK LONDONS AT HOME -                         | 192  |
| XIX.    | THE SCUTTLING OF THE <i>Geier</i> -                | 201  |
| XX.     | OFF TO THE GREAT WAR - -                           | 210  |
| XXI.    | FIRST ENGAGEMENT - - - -                           | 221  |
| XXII.   | AFTER THE ATTACK - - -                             | 233  |
| XXIII.  | THE LIVENS PROJECTOR AND<br>"THE WRATH OF GOD" - - | 242  |
| XXIV.   | DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECTOR                        | 253  |

|         |                                                  |     |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| XXV.    | HUMOUR IN THE WAR - - -                          | 264 |
| XXVI.   | WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME                       | 280 |
| XXVII.  | WORKING WITH THE ROYAL<br>AIR FORCE - - - - -    | 293 |
| XXVIII. | VISIT TO THE GRAND FLEET - -                     | 307 |
| XXIX.   | WOUNDED FOR THE SECOND TIME                      | 313 |
| XXX.    | THE BATTLE OF AMIENS - -                         | 325 |
| XXXI.   | THE ARMISTICE - - - - -                          | 334 |
| XXXII.  | DEMOBILIZATION - - - - -                         | 344 |
| XXXIII. | AGRICULTURAL WORK IN<br>WESTERN CANADA - - - - - | 352 |
| XXXIV.  | WAR AGAIN! - - - - -                             | 363 |

## Illustrations

Harry Strange today . . . . . *Frontispiece*

*Facing Page*

As a first-class scout in the Boer War . . . . . 58

Charmian and Jack London as Harry Strange  
knew them . . . . . 210

A Meeting of the Spruce Creek Miner's Adjust-  
ment Committee . . . . . 210

Kathleen Strange . . . . . 322

Outside Buckingham Palace after having re-  
ceived the Military Cross, with Mrs.  
Strange, and Lieutenant and Mrs. R.  
Stewart . . . . . 330

The day before the Battle of the Somme, at the  
entrance of the dugout which housed the  
flame projector . . . . . 330



## CHAPTER ONE

### Early Boyhood in England

I SHALL never forget my fifth birthday—which is my earliest memory of all—because it was so different from what I had expected it to be. Instead of having a nice party, and a big, sugar-coated cake, with five candles on it, I received a sound thrashing and was put to bed!

It was all on account of the nut man. In these modern days, nuts from all over the world are sold at nut shops, but in the days of my boyhood in England they were peddled by a man who came around the streets carrying a large, shallow basket on his head. The basket was some four feet in diameter and had little divisions in it, each one of which contained nuts of a different kind.

My father was particularly fond of nuts, so the nut man was a regular caller at our home. (The nuts, I might remark, were also used by my father as a medium for geography lessons. A large map of the world would be spread on the library floor and then my father would place the different kinds of nuts on the countries from whence they had come.)

A few days before my fifth birthday, an animal-loving aunt of mine had presented me with a little fox-terrier dog. I received instructions, however, not



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

to let the dog out when people came to the house, because, having come from the country, the dog had been trained to jump at beggars and tramps and so might do an innocent caller some harm.

On the morning of my fifth birthday, I saw the nut man coming down the street. From a window I watched him enter our gate and approach the house. Something possessed me to open the door and let the dog out at him.

During the exciting scuffle that ensued, the nuts fell all over the gravelled walk, and some slight damage was done to the nut man's leg. My father had to pay a pretty penny afterwards to placate the man's wounded feelings and to cover the cost of the nuts. Naturally I had to be punished and so there was no birthday party.

My father's fondness for nuts, by the way, almost resulted in him becoming a rich man. One day, when a friend brought him the manuscript of a play to read, and invited him to take a financial part in the staging of it, my father agreed to do so because he was struck by one line, which read: "Brazil, where the nuts come from." My father bought a share in the play but when it was produced it was a complete failure. He sold his share very cheaply and wrote the whole thing off as a bad investment. Later the play was put on under different direction and became one of the greatest theatrical successes of all time. The name of the play was *Charlie's Aunt!*

At the time of the nut episode we lived in a large house in Putney, on the outskirts of London, on what

## EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND

was then part of my maternal grandfather's town farm. In this house I had been born.

My grandfather was a merchant in the city and, as was the custom with most merchants of those days, he produced on his land sufficient pork, bacon, eggs, butter, milk and vegetables to provide for his family.

Ours was a large and happy family, consisting of my Grandfather Strange, my Grandmother Clarke, my mother and father, my four brothers and one sister, besides numerous uncles and aunts who visited us at frequent intervals all the year round.

Grandmother Clarke, it seemed to me, was the real head of the household. She looked the very embodiment of the Mother in Whistler's famous picture of that name. She wore a lace cap on her head, a Paisley shawl about her shoulders, and a shiny black silk dress that fell in stiff folds to her feet. She had a lean yellow face and a very long nose. If you were to place my grandmother's picture alongside one of Bishop Latimer—that same Bishop Latimer who in 1555, being adjudged a heretic, was led out in the City of Oxford to be burned at the stake—you would notice a strong resemblance, for the old lady was a direct descendant of that worthy martyr, and was extraordinarily proud of the fact. At least one son in each generation of our family has borne the name of Latimer ever since Bishop Latimer died. (My own name is Henry George Latimer.)

Grandmother Clarke had borne thirteen children and only on one occasion had a doctor officially visited

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

her home. That was when her son Willie jumped out of a second-storey window, hoping to land on a pile of straw but, missing his aim, had fallen on the flagstoned pavement instead and so had broken his hip.

She was a very strong-minded old lady, was Grandmother Clarke, and she invariably had her own way. When her suggestions were even mildly questioned, she would fly into a terrible rage and storm:

"Don't argue with me. I always know what is best!"

Curiously enough, what Grandmother Clarke recommended usually turned out to be all right.

The old lady would tell us children the most interesting stories about her experiences in keeping house after the Crimean War. Most of her brothers and cousins had gone to the War, and many of them had been killed in it. One, she used to boast proudly, had been a member of the famous Six Hundred, who charged at Balaclava.

Living was very expensive after the Crimean War. The price of bread and meat, she told us, had gone up very high and money did not go far. The whole family had been on very "short commons" but somehow they had managed to pull through—and without any help from the Government, either!

\* \* \* \*

We saw but little of my mother when I was a small boy. She was quite young, and my father believed in relieving her of all responsibility so far as we children were concerned. We had capable nursemaids to look after us and saw our parents only at stated times.

## EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND

My father and I, however, were particularly close friends. He was a great reader, and it is from him, I believe, that I have inherited an intense love of books. He was an admirer of the Anglican service, and so the first books with which I became acquainted, after the usual baby books, were the *Holy Bible* and the *Book of Common Prayer*. Following these came Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; then *The Swiss Family Robinson* and *Robinson Crusoe*, both of which held me enthralled. I loved, too, the annual edition of *The Boy's Own Paper*, which every uncle seemed to give to his nephews on their birthdays when I was young.

My father's library was one that any person might well have envied—a huge, dimly lit room, with shelves, extending from the floor to the ceiling on all four sides, filled with books. In the centre of the room at one end was a large open fireplace, in which burned logs taller than myself. In front of this fireplace was spread a large white bearskin rug. As soon as I could read, and had some understanding, my father turned me loose in this library, to choose and read as I pleased. I would lie on the rug for hours, immersed in a book, completely lost to the world.

My father was an ardent lover of Charles Dickens, and even before I was old enough fully to appreciate Dicken's characters, he used to take me to see places in London that Dickens had made famous in his stories, such as No. 24 Fetter Lane, which was believed to be the original of the Old Curiosity Shop, the row of houses in Broad Street, in one of which it was said that

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Little Emily had been found, and, most terror-striking of all to a small boy, the sloping roof of a house in Bermondsey from which Bill Sykes was supposed to have fallen, and accidentally hanged himself, after having murdered his former sweetheart, Nancy.

One day, while I was still quite young, there fell into my hands a great treasure. This was a complete set of Harrison Ainsworth. What thrilling adventures those books contained! I became, in imagination, the gallant rescuer of captured maidens, the terror of evil-doers. I sailed the Seven Seas and travelled to the far ends of the earth. I soon developed a desire to set forth and see some of the places about which I had read, and in this ambition I was continually encouraged by my Grandfather Strange, who lived with us.

Grandfather Strange was a very wonderful old man. He had been quite blind for about twenty years but he retained all his other faculties to the full. (He lived, by the way, to be well over ninety. One day he discovered that he could no longer enjoy his rum. "That's a sure sign it's time for me to die," he said. And he did die, in a few hours.)

Grandfather Strange had been an extensive traveller in his time, having visited almost every country in the world. He had been to India, Ceylon, Siberia, Russia, to every country in Europe, to the western part of the United States and to Mexico. He used to say that the Pacific Coast, from San Francisco to the Mexican Border, was the most satisfactory place, he thought, in which a white man could live and enjoy life. Next to

## EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND

it, he considered, came the French and Italian coasts, along the Mediterranean shores, and after them the north coast of Spain.

My father and my grandfather were always arguing about the way I should be educated.

My father used to say to me:

"Now, Harry, you stay in one place. Become an expert at one thing. Read all you can and educate yourself that way. Remember, a rolling stone gathers no moss."

To which my grandfather would counter:

"Nonsense! I say travel and learn. Discard your prejudices by seeing the world. Sterne says, you will remember, that 'improvements are to be got by sailing and posting,' but don't," the old gentleman would continue, "travel like the learned Smelfungus." (My grandfather, it must be recorded, was forever quoting the *Sentimental Journey*, and *Don Quixote*—"the only two books worth trunk room to a serious traveller," he thought, although he would sometimes say: "I'd add a third book if someone would bind separately the Falstaff parts from Shakespeare.")

At that my father would remark, with a gentle smile:

"You forget, sir, that your own favourite Sancho Panza once said, after his wearisome travels, that he could have seen just as much by staying at home, and would have kept himself dryshod into the bargain!"

All my life I have been torn between these two im-

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

pulses—I have wanted to travel, and yet, too, I have wanted to stay at home and read books!

\* \* \* \*

When I was about six years old, we had a very special visitor, who stayed for a month at our house. This was my father's great-aunt Amelia Himbray from Dorsetshire. She was well over ninety years of age and looked as though she had just stepped out of a mediæval miniature.

On her head she wore a fragile lace cap, and from under this cap, down each side of her face, fell a mass of tightly-woven grey curls, which touched her shoulders and came so far forward in front that they completely hid her ears.

Great-aunt Amelia walked into the house with the air of an empress. We were all presented to her in the drawing-room, where she held court in a large arm-chair. I was so taken aback by her appearance, I remember, that I could not repress a childish giggle.

"I think," said my great-great-aunt reprovingly, "that you are a rude, pert little boy. I shall have to set about teaching you manners, I can see."

My father was considerably embarrassed by this remark, since teaching us good manners was that part of our education he had taken upon himself!

Great-aunt Amelia used to tell the most fascinating stories about the days when she was a girl. Her most vivid memories seemed to be of Napoleon Bonaparte, and of how frightened people had been when "Old

## EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND

Boney", as she called him, had set out to invade England. It was said that he had a lot of barges waiting in Boulogne Harbour, she told us, and that the troops for the invasion were camped nearby. It was even rumoured that from the cliffs of Dover, on a clear night, you could see the glow of their campfires.

Great-aunt Amelia described to us, too, how many people in London closed up their homes at that time, and moved their families and their household treasures down to the little villages in Dorsetshire and other inland counties—just as they have done in this present war—so that Napoleon's troops could not harm them if they managed to reach London. One of her relatives, she said, moved with his family to far-away Nova Scotia in Canada.

Napoleon never did reach London, of course, and my great-great-aunt explained how relieved everyone was when the news came that he had been defeated at Waterloo. She told us that her father had joined with several other gentlemen in trying to have "Old Boney" brought over as a prisoner to England, and taken through the streets of London in a cage, so that people might see with their own eyes that they had nothing to fear from him any more.

It was from great-aunt Amelia that I discovered that our family name was really L'Estrange. Apparently French names had been unpopular in England during the Napoleonic Wars, just as German names were unpopular in England during the Great War and again are in this. For that reason my great-grandfather had



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

dropped the French prefix and it had never been restored.

Great-aunt Amelia used to remind my father that he had a famous ancestor, one Guy L'Estrange, a Norman knight.

"You should be proud of him and of bearing his name. Why don't you change back?" she would ask.

But my father used to smile good-naturedly and shake his head. And so Strange we have remained in name—and some say in nature, too—to this very day.

\* \* \* \*

There are a few unrelated memories of childhood days in England that cling closely to my mind.

There is the memory, for instance, of being taken to St. John's Church in Putney for the first time. The service was very high Anglican and I fell in love with it at once and have loved it ever since. A musical setting was used for the singing of the responses there that was most beautiful, I thought, but although I have attended Anglican services in many different countries, I have never heard that particular setting again.

Christmas, of course, was a festive occasion in our house. It was particularly enjoyable to me because we children were regularly taken to the theatre twice during the Christmas holidays—once to Drury Lane Pantomime, where we would sit in a box, and the other time to the Egyptian Hall, to see Maskelyne and Cook's programme of magic. These excursions to the theatre

## EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND

were usually preceded by a grand dinner, from the effects of which we children were invariably ill.

My father loved good music and the theatre, and later, as I grew older, I was permitted to accompany him to hear great artists and to see fine plays. I remember hearing Patti sing, and the De Reszke Brothers, and many other famous singers at Covent Garden. I saw Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, and Johnny Toole. I attended the first night of *The Only Way*, with Sir Martin Harvey in the leading role. I saw Pavlova, the great Russian dancer—and I have loved classical dancing ever since. I listened to the beloved Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in *The Elder Miss Blossom*—a most beautiful play, I thought. I knew intimately, from across the footlights, such well-beloved characters as Dan Leno, Herbert Campbell, Albert Chevalier, Chirgwin, the "White-Eyed Kaffir", Marie Lloyd, Little Titch, Bessie Bellwood, Lois Fuller, and many others, most of whom have long since taken their last curtain calls, and who, I often think, have never been, and perhaps never will be, equalled as true artists in their own particular field.

I think, however, that my most vivid childhood memory of all is the one concerned with "Jack the Ripper", the famous criminal who terrorized London at that time.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that "Jack the Ripper" was a mysterious murderer, who chose as his victims women of a certain unfortunate class. He killed

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

them by ripping open their stomachs in a quite professional way.

We had a cook, two housemaids and a nurse in our ménage, and "Jack the Ripper" and his foul crimes were a topic of constant conversation below stairs.

One wet and stormy night, when my father and mother were out, loud cries of: "Extry! Extry!" 'Orrible murder! Jack the Ripper's done it again!" occurred on the street outside. (The fashion then was to have a man on each side of the street, one with a high treble voice and the other with a low deep bass. Alternately they would sing out their dismal dirge and the effect was usually startling in the extreme.)

I was in my father's library, reading by the flickering light of the fire. Suddenly the door burst open and one of the housemaids came running excitedly into the room.

"Oh, Master Harry!" she cried, "will you please come downstairs quick? We're all so terrible frightened! Please come and sit with us a while."

I went down and found the servants shivering over the fire, absolutely hypnotized by the ghastly details on the pink page of the paper they had bought.

"Ooo!" they kept exclaiming, as they read avidly on and on. They closed all the doors and windows and locked them and clung to me for comfort, a little boy of barely seven, but at least one of the male sex!

\* \* \* \*

Just about that time my health began to break down.

#### EARLY BOYHOOD IN ENGLAND

Perhaps it was from some inherent weakness, that I have long since outgrown; more likely than not it was from too much reading—"He's a regular little bookworm," my grandfather used to say.

Anyway, things became so serious that one day I was taken by our family doctor in his carriage through the streets of London to Harley Street, where a tall man, with a long black beard, but very kindly grey eyes, tapped me and pumped me and listened all over my poor little naked body, and then gave it as his verdict that the winters in England were too damp for me, and that I should at once be sent to a drier and warmer climate, preferably to north-eastern France or southern Germany, where there were spruce and pine trees.

The next thing I remember I was on my way to France.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Schooldays in France

A FRIEND of my father's accompanied me across the Channel. All that I can recall of the voyage was that I was given a large ham sandwich to eat, much to the irritation, apparently, of a certain old gentleman who was not having a very pleasant time. I remember him shouting angrily:

"Throw that boy's sandwich overboard, and the damn boy with it, if you please!"

We landed at Boulogne, where we took a train and journeyed for a long distance across France. We arrived at last at a town where, to my amazement, the people all spoke a language I could not understand.

I was introduced to a French lady and gentleman, a Monsieur and Madame Paul, with whom I was in future to live. An open farm wagon, drawn by two oxen, was waiting outside the station, and into this my bags were piled. We all climbed in and then a French farmer, who wore, it seemed to me, a woman's dress, but which I afterwards found out was called a smock or peasant's blouse, drove the wagon all night long. Finally, in the early hours of the morning, we went up a steep hill and all at once stopped before the door of what looked to me like a great castle. It was, I discovered, the *chateau* or country seat of Monsieur and Madame Paul.

## SCHOOLDAYS IN FRANCE

I was put to bed and immediately fell sound asleep. Next morning, when I wakened up, I went to the window and looked out. In the distance I saw a densely-wooded slope. At the foot of the slope was a little village, dominated by a church having two tall spires. Outside the *chateau*, on the large front lawn, were a number of fir trees. There was one quite close to my window, and suddenly, out of the branches, there peeped a little girl's face. She smiled at me very sweetly and I fell in love with her at first sight. Millie, I soon learned her name was. She was the daughter of the Paul's *fermier* or farmer, and we were sweethearts from that time until I left France.

Soon on the lawn appeared a man with a pretty little pony. He began exercising it up and down. The little girl pointed to the pony and from the pony to me. I hurried into my clothes and rushed downstairs. The *fermier* put me on the pony's back and I rode round and round the lawn. All my homesickness vanished, and from that moment, I admit, I hardly ever thought about my parents in England, so happy did I become.

Each day my little friend Millie took me walking through the woods and up the mountain sides. By the end of the first week I could understand a little French and was able to say a few words.

In a short time, however, Monsieur Paul left for his business in Egypt. I do not know to this day what it was, but he seemed to be a very rich man. Madame, who spoke English well, told me that now I would have to go to school. She did not care for the school

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

in our own village, she said, and so I must go to a boarding-school in another village, some fifty kilometres away. Into the ox-cart I went once more and off we started on the long ride.

We stopped, I remember, for *déjeuner* at a restaurant en route.

Madame Paul studied the menu. "We will have some carp," she said.

To my amazement the head waiter led us out into a small courtyard where there was an artificial pool. In the pool a number of fish were swimming lazily around. Madame Paul chose the fish she wanted. The waiter scooped it out with a net and carried it away. In a short time it appeared on our table, beautifully cooked.

I ate a few mouthfuls, but into my mind came the thought of the poor fish, swimming around in the pool outside only a few minutes before. I felt something queer happen in my stomach and before I could leave the room I had vomited all over the floor. I was terribly ashamed and apologized profusely, but Madame Paul only said: "*Mon pauvre petit Henri! N'importe!*"

After another long drive in the ox-wagon, we entered, towards evening, a country village, in the centre of which was a large square with a fountain in the middle of it. Several oxen and cows were being watered at the fountain and a number of small French boys, about my own age, and quite naked, were swimming about in the water to their heart's content.

We stopped before a two-storey building, which was

## SCHOOLDAYS IN FRANCE

not only the village school, but the high school for the entire district as well.

The schoolmaster and his wife welcomed us at the door. The schoolmaster had short black hair that stood up straight all over his head and that came to a sort of V in front of his forehead. I found that many Frenchmen of that day affected that style. His wife was a pleasant-faced lady who came forward and took my hand.

*"Voici le petit anglais!"* she cried.

I was led into a big room filled with boys. They all clustered around me, eyeing me from head to foot. The schoolmaster introduced each one of them to me in turn and then told them my name.

"This is Henri Strange," he said, in French. "He is English, not—understand well—German. You must treat him very kindly and help him to learn French."

In a few minutes my friend Madame Paul bade me goodbye and left. There I was, alone in another strange place, and surrounded, as I thought, by the hereditary enemies of the English. My heart, for the moment, felt heavy indeed.

The next morning, however, I felt much better and prepared to tackle school. The lessons at first were very difficult for me, for it must be realized that there was not a single person in the whole school, who could speak English, and I could only speak a few halting sentences in French. At first I could understand very little but, as the days passed, things became easier and



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

easier, and soon I could take an active part in what was going on.

It was not long, of course, before I had a fight. I had always been told in England that one Englishman was as good as three Frenchmen, so, a few days after my arrival, on account of the usual teasing that a new boy gets at any school, and particularly on account of being called by one of the boys "*un salle anglais*"—a dirty Englishman—I challenged *three* of them to fight, feeling quite confident that I could win!

I was quickly disillusioned. In a trice they had knocked me down on the floor and were sitting on top of me. Then they carried me to the village square, stripped off my clothes and threw me into the fountain. I was humiliated beyond words. However, I put on my clothes and then challenged *one* boy. I found out that one English boy was just barely a match for one French boy!

I soon became good friends with the boys, however, and quickly learned, with them, to hate the Germans. Not a day passed but what we were reminded by our teachers—there was a staff of three at the school besides the headmaster—of the duties of a French boy. These included love of one's country, love of one's father and mother and obedience to them, love of one's grandfather and grandmother and obedience to them also, and love of one's brothers and sisters. But a French boy's chief object in life was to fit himself to be a good soldier, and to help win back Alsace and Lorraine from

## SCHOOLDAYS IN FRANCE

"*ses salles allemands*". (How much has happened since then!)

This last object was drilled into us day after day, week after week. It was not long, therefore, before the doctrine took complete possession of me, and my dearest wish in life became to be a French soldier and to fight for "*la belle France*".

Looking back now I realize that the methods of teaching at that particular school were very different from those practised today in the United States and Canada, or from what, indeed, were practised even in England at that time. The subjects taught were few, but they were taught thoroughly, and the method of teaching seemed to be founded on making the pupil think for himself.

Whenever the afternoon was sunny, the schoolmaster would close the school and take us out for a long walk in the woods. Here he would give us what he called a "natural history" lesson. We would be instructed to watch the habits of insects and small animals and birds. Foxes, hares and rabbits abounded. Once we saw a wild boar, with fearsome-looking tusks. The schoolmaster knew much of the habits of all living creatures and we learned about life from him in a fine, wholesome way. Above all, we learned of the place that each created thing held in nature's scheme.

We were all warned to watch carefully for vipers, for these abounded in the district and were poisonous. What should one do, a boy asked one day, if a viper bit one?

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Well, said the schoolmaster, first of all one must keep a cool head. Wash the wound thoroughly with water and squeeze out as much of the poison as you could. If you had a friend with you, get him to suck the wound. If you were alone, take your knife, grit your teeth, and scrape as deeply as you could. Then walk home quietly and go straight to the schoolmaster or the priest. (There was no doctor in the village and never had been one.)

"But," one pupil suggested, "supposing one is where there is no pond or stream and so one has no water with which to cleanse the wound?"

I have never forgotten the schoolmaster's response. Looking at us with a twinkle in his eye he said:

"*N'oubliez pas que chaque'un porte sa petite fontaine!*" (Do not forget that each one carries his own little fountain!)

All heads nodded solemnly in agreement.

One of the duties imposed upon the boys at this school was to attend the weekly meetings of the village council at *La Mairie* or Town Hall.

The *chambre du conseil* was arranged with rows of benches. We boys sat in the rear, where we could be seen but not heard. We listened to the discussions and the debates, which were all carried on in a leisurely but dignified fashion.

The schoolmaster was not a member of the village council, but if the proposition being discussed was a difficult one, he was often consulted and asked to give his views and his advice.

## SCHOOLDAYS IN FRANCE

The day following these meetings, each boy would have to write an essay on what he had heard and give his own opinion on what had taken place. In that way the training of people for government began at a very early age.

I was still a bookworm but here in France my reading took a different turn. I now became acquainted with Dumas and Molière, with Corneille and Racine, with the *Fables* of La Fontaine and with Jules Verne's *Visit to the Moon*, *Visit to the Centre of the Earth*, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. We also had to read a good deal of French history, and to my amazement I discovered that the wars which in English history books were said to have been won by the English, in French history books were claimed to have been won by the French!

I progressed so well at this little French school that on my ninth birthday I was able to write a several-page letter home to my father in what my master said was excellent French. In reward for this I received from my father a golden guinea.

I was so excited that I rushed down to the village and bought a black silk shawl, which I presented to the schoolmaster's wife as a token of my love and esteem for her. I must say that I suffered some pangs of conscience afterwards for not having bought something for my little sweetheart Millie, back at Madame Paul's.

## CHAPTER THREE

### French Village Life

THE FOUR years I spent in France were, I think, among the happiest of my life. The schoolmaster and his wife, my teachers and fellow-pupils, and the people of the village, all were so very kind to me.

I made one particularly fine friend in the village. This was the *curé* of the Roman Catholic Church. I soon came to love the old church, and especially the Roman Catholic service, with its beautiful music and solemn ritual, so much that I wanted to join the church myself. I dearly desired to be a choir boy, or better still, an incense server. We boys used to practise swinging the censor in the dormitory at night and I became quite adept at it.

But the priest smilingly refused to let me join his church. I must not give up my own religion, he said. Once every three months he took me to the town of Vesoul, many kilometres away, where there was a Protestant Church. He saw to it that I attended service there. I have often heard it said that it is the duty of a Roman Catholic priest to win for his church as many converts as he can. What happened to me in France gave me quite the opposite impression.

An important character in the village, and one with whom I also became good friends, was the *Crieur public*—the Town Crier. Only very occasionally did a news-

## FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE

paper come to our village. But the villagers heard the news, just the same. Every day the Town Crier came around and read the official bulletins, giving the news of the village, of France, and of the rest of the world. Dressed in the most gorgeous apparel, with tri-coloured sash and three-cornered cockaded hat, he certainly was a most impressive-looking personage. He would march from place to place, always stopping at the same appointed spots at the same appointed time, give a roll on his drum and, when the people had gathered around, read out the news items in a loud, cracked falsetto voice. At the end he would shout:

*"Vive la France!"* And the people would all shout back: *"Vive la France!"*

Once a great scandal occurred in the village. A hired man was found in bed with an old farmer's young wife. The man and the woman were dragged forth and a procession formed, with the Town Crier at its head continually beating his drum. The procession marched to the fountain in the village square. Fully clothed, the two culprits were thrown in. After having been given a good ducking, the hired man was ordered to leave the village and, wet as he was, he started walking away. The woman went back to her husband and soon assumed the same respected place she had enjoyed in the village before the affair had occurred!

From that experience I found out that the village fountain was not only a place of refreshment for animals, and of recreation for little boys, but also a place of punishment for ill-doers as well.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Only once, in all the years that I lived in France, was there any contact in our village with a criminal.

News came one day that a neighbouring village had been robbed. It was given out by the Town Crier. "*Attention, gare!*" he warned. "Look out! The bandit may come here next!"

Two days later a gendarme appeared. He was clad in a gay uniform, consisting of a red coat, blue trousers, black leggings coming right up to his thighs, and tall, three-cornered hat. He carried a carbine on one side of his horse and a long sword on the other. Walking behind him, and tied to the saddle by a long leather strap, was a poor, bedraggled-looking man. This, we learned, was the great bandit himself!

The gendarme was most solicitous of his prisoner. He saw to it that the man had straw for his bedding and, because it was cold, some hot wine to drink and hot soup, meat and bread to eat. He saw to it, also, that the thief's wooden clogs, or *sabots*, were taken off and new straw provided for them. He had a basin of water brought so that the man could wash his hands and feet.

The gendarme, who was taking his prisoner to Vesoul, had to stay in our village for the night. There was no jail or lockup, so what to do with the thief?

The schoolmaster said that he would be responsible for him. The man was therefore brought to our school. He was given a bed in the cellar among the bottles of wine and barrels of sauerkraut.

Late that night some of the boys crept down to see the prisoner. With a smile he beckoned us in and enter-

## FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE

tained us, when we should have been sleeping in bed, with wonderful stories of the great world outside. He told us of the different places to which he had been and, most exciting of all, about the strange desert country of Algiers, where he had served as a soldier of France. He showed us a wound in his leg made by an Arab spear.

The next day he had to leave. But he did not leave on foot, the way he had arrived. He was loaned a horse by the villagers and was so loaded down with parcels containing gifts that his horse could hardly stand up!

\* \* \* \*

Harvest was a very important event in our village. I was there when a wonderful new threshing machine was brought in.

Grain-growing, up to that time, had been done in the same way as it had been done for thousands of years; in the same way, indeed, as it had been done in the days of the ancient Egyptians, the schoolmaster told us.

The seed was sown by hand on the oxen-ploughed fields, from a sack slung across the sower's shoulder. The mature crop was cut with a sickle, sometimes with a scythe. It was then bound in sheaves, tied with straw and shocked in the fields.

After the grain was shocked, the young children and the old men and women walked up and down the fields gleaning the heads of grain that had escaped being bound in the sheaves. This gleaned grain was the prop-



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

erty of whoever picked it up and in our village it was all gathered together and given to *les pauvres*—the poor. I remember that the grain was blessed by the priest as it went into the mill and the loaves of bread were again blessed as they came to the baker and before being presented to the poor.

When the shocks in the fields were ripe—in about two weeks—the sheaves were loaded on to ox-wagons and hauled to the farmers' barns. They were stored in the lofts and during the course of the winter the grain was threshed out with flails by groups of men. Two rows of men—six men in each row—would stand opposite each other. They would sing as they swung the great flails that threshed the grain. We boys were sometimes allowed to try our hand with the flails. They were so big and heavy, however, that after a few swings, most boys of my age would be overbalanced and would fall down on the grain.

After the grain was threshed it would be gathered into wicker baskets and carried outside, where other men, standing in a current of wind, tossed it up and down in round, flat winnowing baskets, and the wind blew the chaff away from the grain. The precious golden kernels were then placed in sacks and the sacks, when filled to the brim, were weighed on a scale and finally tied.

The new threshing machine was a very modern contraption. It had big cylinders and loudly-whirring wheels and belts. The bundles of grain were placed, one at a time, into the great open mouth. The kernels

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## FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE

came out of one opening and straw and chaff were blown out of another.

The whole village stood around in wonderment the first time the machine worked. Before it started, however, the *curé*, attended by two of his altar servers, blessed the machine and sprinkled holy water on it. Then away it went. The power to drive it was furnished by one trained ox, that walked up a sort of endless sloping stairway, and that had been brought along with the machine. Everyone thought it was simply marvellous, and what was the world coming to now? And wouldn't it put people out of work, some enquired?

One harvest time a curious thing occurred. The crops of hay, wheat, oats and barley had been very heavy that year. For some reason, though, the usual seasonal harvest labourers from the south did not come up in their usual numbers, and so a number of German-speaking people from Alsace came to help with the harvest instead.

Much to our surprise we found these German people to be very decent indeed. A few of them could speak French and were able to make themselves understood in the village.

After the harvest was over, the annual harvest dinner took place. At the conclusion of the dinner, one of the local farmers made a speech. He said that we had been very glad to entertain the people from Alsace and to find out what fine people they really were. If *all* Germans were as kind and good as the visitors, then

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

surely there need never be any more wars between Germany and France?

Then the *curé* rose to his feet and told the villagers that the truth was that most German people were fine, as most French people were fine also, and that there really was no need for wars at all, because the simple people of every country really respected and liked each other, and if this could only be understood, in every village in France and Germany, and in every country in the world, then the great Peace that Christ had intended would actually come upon the earth.

\* \* \* \*

I was a very mischievous little boy, I fear, and it is a wonder that I did not get into more trouble than I did. The worst thing I ever did, however, I was not punished for at all!

It happened, I recall, at Easter-time, when the Legend of the Bells occurred. This legend related that once a year the bells of the village church flew away to Rome to be blessed by the Pope. It took some three days, it was said, for the bells to fly to Rome and return.

The story sounded like a "tall one" to me, and so I determined to investigate. I went down to the church one day and, sure enough, the six long ropes, that usually hung down in the entrance, had gone. My mind was still suspicious, however. Had the bells really flown away, I asked myself? Might it not be that the ropes had just been pulled up and hidden out of sight? I would find out.

## FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE

I knew where the key to the belfrey hung on a large hook. I got it down, opened the door at the foot of the stairs and quietly crept up and up. The bats that lived in the belfrey began to fly about my ears. But I pressed on in the darkness, my heart beating very fast. It was late afternoon and I found the shadows more frightening than I had ever known shadows to be before.

At last I came to the loft. There were the bells, their ropes neatly coiled up out of sight.

"So it's all a lie!" I told myself, exultantly. "The bells haven't gone to Rome at all!"

Now I could lord it over my schoolmates. *I knew the truth.* Even the grown-up people in the village did not know it. They believed that the bells had gone to visit the Pope.

But how was I to prove my knowledge? Suddenly the idea occurred to me that I would ring a bell.

I grabbed hold of the nearest rope and began to pull on it with all my might.

Soon the great bell began to sway. At last it hit the clapper. Ding-dong, ding-dong it went. For quite a while I tolled it. Then, all at once, the shadows seemed to get longer and darker. Terror gripped me. I dropped the rope and ran downstairs as if demons were after me. Quickly I locked the belfrey door and ran out of the church.

The priest, the verger and the schoolmaster met me at the entrance. Half the villagers were gathered outside the church. Much consternation had occurred, it

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

appeared, for the kindly mayor of the village was ill and thought to be dying, and it was the custom in the village, as in many others, to toll the bell when someone died. Everyone had jumped to the conclusion that the mayor had died and that spirits were tolling a ghostly bell.

I had expected to be severely punished. But instead I was quietly taken aside by the priest and the school-master and given a serious talking to. I explained to them that I had suspected that the bells had not gone to Rome and that I only wanted to prove to my friends that the story of the bells was a myth. In return the priest told me that there were certain little fables in which it was good for simple people to believe, even if they were not strictly true. Surely I did not want to upset my good friends' hearts and minds? I was told that I would be doing a kindly action to the whole village if I would say nothing of what I had done or seen. I was very glad to make this promise.

\* \* \* \*

Twice a year I went back for my holidays to the Pauls'. Usually I spent the whole time with the Pauls themselves, on their extensive farm, but sometimes I went with them much farther afield.

Once, I remember, we went to Monte Carlo. The moment we arrived, Madame entered almost ferociously into the business of gambling. Each morning we could tell, from her behaviour, whether she had won or lost the night before. She did not try to hide her emotions at all.

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## FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE

Another time we went to Rome during the winter, and also to Egypt, Italy and Germany. Once we visited the great Fair at Nijni-Novgorod in Russia. What an exciting trip that was! We passed through many different countries and at every frontier there were soldiers, armed with bayonets, swords and long knives, who questioned us before they let us pass.

During one vacation at the Pauls' I had an unusual experience.

It appeared to be the custom for the shooting rights over large areas of the village common land—that is, over the mountain sides and the woods—to be let out by auction each year. Whoever bought the rights had the sole right for shooting—usually more for filling the pot than for sport, by the way—over that land.

One year Monsieur and Madame Paul bought the shooting rights for miles around their *chateau*. I was by this time sufficiently trusted to be allowed to carry a small single-barrelled shot-gun. I had been thoroughly drilled in the art of using it with safety to myself and to others.

As I was walking on the mountain side one day, I saw to my surprise two gentlemen, evidently strangers, and obviously town dwellers, trespassing on our shooting preserve. They each carried a gun. I rushed up to them and exclaimed angrily:

"Gentlemen, this shooting preserve belongs to my friends, the Pauls. I live with them. It is forbidden to shoot here."

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

One of the gentlemen pulled me hurriedly to one side and said:

"But understand, *mon garçon*, this is *Monsieur le President* of France."

I had heard of President Carnot, of course. But it did not seem to me that even a President was above the law. So I replied:

"It does not matter, *monsieur*. Even if he were the King of England, who is a far superior person, he has no right, under the law, to shoot on this domain."

Both gentlemen laughed heartily at this, and the President, who was a fine-looking man, with a beard, bent and kissed me on both cheeks.

"That is well spoken, *mon garçon*," he said. "And now, will you conduct us to your friends, the Pauls, I am sure they will understand when we explain."

As we walked along, chatting together, the President asked me how long I had been in France, and did I like it, and what did I intend to do when I became a man.

"*Monsieur le President*," I answered proudly, "I have only one ambition. It is to become a brave soldier of France and help win back Alsace and Lorraine." (Little did I know then that this childish ambition was to be realized one day!)

How they laughed at that! The President walked with his arm about my shoulders and told me he was proud to know such a patriotic little boy.

Monsieur and Madame Paul were very flustered and excited when they found out who they had for guests.

## FRENCH VILLAGE LIFE

A grand luncheon was prepared and some very old and highly-cherished burgundy wine was brought up from the cellar in honour of the occasion. *La France* and *L'Angleterre* were toasted with formality, and before the President left he invited me to call on him if I ever came to Paris.

From that time on I became known in the village as the boy who had been embraced by the President of France, and I assumed a new and much higher status in the life of the country-side and particularly in my own school.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Apprenticed to Engineering

**A**T THE end of four years it was decided that I was sufficiently recovered in health to return to England.

Back among my own people I found it very difficult to speak English and could not read or write it at all. I could only dimly understand what was said to me, and I invariably answered in French. For a long time I found myself thinking out the answer to a question in French first, and then translating it word by word into English in my mind before replying aloud. Everyone laughed at me for this, but I remember my father saying that he had never met an English boy who could give such clear and logical answers as I could for my age.

For the next three years my schooling was that of the normal English boy. I did fairly well in my studies and engaged in the usual games and fights. What stands out most clearly in my mind, however, is the fact that at the end of the first year's examinations, while I led my form in logic and mathematics, I received the lowest marks of all in French! Evidently what I had learned in France of French grammar was very different from what one was taught in England. My French accent, too, was said to be very curious, and when I took it upon myself to enlarge the effete

#### APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING

translations of "the pen of my aunt's gardener", and so forth, into lengthy dissertations upon aunts and gardening in general, as I had been taught to do in France, I was considered to be decidedly queer.

It was at this period of my life that my father insisted that I should begin to study Latin and Greek.

My father was a learned man, an old-fashioned scholar, whose mind revelled in the world of the ancient classics. He had an explanation for almost any situation or problem in life out of the great books, and he was never tired of instilling into me, and into any other boy who would listen, the necessity for learning Latin and Greek. I could always be sure of a silver threepenny piece if I would sit down for half an hour and attempt to construe some Latin under his guidance. Cicero, Virgil and Ovid were his favourites, but his mind also loved to dwell with Homer, Plato and Aristotle. He had a very dear friend, who often visited him, and as long as I can remember, the two of them seemed to be having an eternal argument concerning the relative virtues of the philosophy of Plato and that of Aristotle. I do not believe that either one converted the other in the slightest degree.

My father also introduced me, at that time, to Thackeray and Scott. I read, with him, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and most of Shakespeare's *Plays*. I loved Plutarch's *Lives* and Aesop's *Fables*, and I read, too, I remember, *The Lays of Ancient Rome*, by Lord Macaulay, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Tennyson's *Poems*. Much of all this, I confess, I found pretty "tough

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

going", with the exception of Bottom and his friends and, above all, the great and incomparable "Falstaff". I learnt him all by heart and remember every line of the vagabond knight's sayings to this day.

\* \* \* \*

Three years after my return from France, a tragedy occurred in our family—one that completely changed the course of my life.

I had been slated to take preliminary education that would fit me for the legal profession. It was felt that my logical, French-trained mind was best suited for that.

Suddenly my father died, while still a comparatively young man.

He had been ill for some time and for several days had eaten hardly anything at all. One morning, when the doctor visited him, he remarked to my mother outside the bedroom door:

"I'm afraid that my old friend is slowly dying of starvation. Is there nothing you can tempt him with to eat?"

"I'll try again," my mother said.

Our kitchen cupboards, at that time, were overflowing with calves' foot jellies and jellies made with wine, and with bottles and cases of sherry, burgundy, madeira and champagne that had been sent by concerned friends.

My mother, with her own hands, prepared my father's favourite dish for lunch—lamb cutlets, green

## APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING

peas and new potatoes. But the sick man barely touched the food with his fork.

My mother broke down in tears.

"Bobbie," she said, "you'd make us all so happy if you'd only try to eat a little. Isn't there *anything* you fancy?"

My father smiled faintly. "The finest dish I ever had in my life," he said, "was on a farm in Dorsetshire. It was a baked pheasant that had been poached. Perhaps, if you could get a Dorsetshire pheasant. . ."

My mother rushed over to the poulterers. But she could find no pheasants there. She came back and said to me:

"Harry, go to the livery at once. Take Jim's carriage and drive to London. Go to Harrod's or Whiteley's and try to buy a pheasant. Here is my purse. Hurry, now."

I went to the livery and ordered the carriage to be harnessed up. (Jim was the coachman who always drove my father wherever he went.) Jim was greatly concerned about my father and instead of sitting inside the carriage, I sat with him on the box.

Driving through South Kensington, I saw some game hanging up outside a poulterer's shop. I stopped the carriage and went inside. I asked the man if he had any Dorsetshire pheasants. He said he thought perhaps he had.

"Were they poached?" I asked eagerly.

The man smiled. "Well, they might have been," he confessed.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

I took a couple of the pheasants and drove back to Putney with them as fast as we could go. I rushed into the house to find the maids crying in the hall. My father, they told me, was sinking fast.

When I came into my father's room, I saw that he was lying very still with his eyes closed. My mother was sitting beside him, weeping quietly.

"It's too late, Harry," she whispered, sadly. "I'm afraid your father's going. We've sent for the doctor."

I moved over to my father's side with the pheasants in my hand. He opened his eyes and saw them and a faint smile came over his face.

"Good lad!" he said. "Well done!" Then he beckoned to me to come nearer, and went on in a fainter voice: "Take care of your mother, Harry. Be a good boy and a good man." And then, after a long pause, he whispered: "The primroses!"

Primroses were his favourite flowers. There was a vase of them on a stand near his bed. I took them out of the water and put them into his hands and then moved his hands up on his chest until the flowers were just under his face. He closed his eyes and gave a soft sigh.

At that moment the door opened and the doctor came in. He looked at my father quickly, pulled back the bedclothes and put his ear to my father's chest. In a moment he straightened up, gently covered my father's face with the sheet, and said quietly:

"He's gone, poor fellow!"

Thus my father passed away, without any struggle

## APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING

or pain or fear. It was the first time I had looked upon death, and, young as I was, it struck me with surprise that there was nothing to be afraid of in death; my father seemed to have welcomed it as a friend.

\* \* \* \*

It was quickly discovered that finances were not at all what they might be. My father had been regarded as a moderately rich man. Investments somehow did not prove up to expectations, however, and it was immediately obvious that I must aspire to something less expensive than the law.

It was finally decided that I should take up engineering, and to that end I was apprenticed, first for a short time in London with the firm of Willans and Robinson, inventors of the famous central valve steam engine, and then later in Manchester, with the well-known firm of Armstrong Whitworths.

In Manchester I came into contact, for the first time in my life, with the typical British working man, and with the real aristocracy of all British labour—the highly-skilled, highly-paid engineering mechanic called “a fitter”.

The apprentices at Armstrong Whitworths were given a thoroughly fine training in all departments of engineering work. Superintendents and managers took a keen and lively interest in the progress of each apprentice and seemed to consider that they had a responsibility, not only for teaching the lads the business of engineering itself but also for teaching them

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

something of the general philosophy of life, and just where engineering and mathematics fitted in.

The work was hard at Armstrong Whitworths and the hours were long. We had to be at our benches at six o'clock in the morning, which meant getting up shortly after five. We worked till eight-thirty and then had half an hour off for breakfast. Back we went to our benches to work from nine to twelve. We had one hour for dinner and worked again from one to five-thirty.

Four nights a week we had to attend technical lectures, either at Owens College or at the Manchester Polytechnic. I chose the latter and there found competent teachers and lecturers, who dealt with the theory of what we had been doing in practice during the day.

I lodged in Manchester with a most excellent family, a man and his wife who to their great regret had no children. The man was one of the head fitters at the works.

They had a simple home and lived modestly on a small salary. The house was always as spick and span as could be. It was scrubbed from top to bottom at least once a week, as I later found out all Manchester houses seemed to be.

I was provided with a small but comfortable bedroom and given the almost exclusive use of a little sitting-room, and though the food was plain and somewhat stolid, there was always plenty of it and I was welcome to all I could eat. When I started out for

## APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING

work each morning, at a quarter to six, I would find on the little hall table a glass of milk and a piece of cake, neither of which were included in our understanding. The amount I paid per week now seems to me to be incredibly small. It is hard to realize that in those days families could live on as little as ten dollars a week and be contented, and even save money to spend on their annual holiday by the sea.

As a rule I had luncheon at the works. A large dining-room was provided and the food we took with us would be heated for us by the company's cooks. Tea or cocoa—I never heard of coffee in those days—would have to be of our own providing.

The eating of the noonday meal usually took somewhat less than the allotted hour. In the spare time left over the men—hundreds and hundreds of them there were—would gather in small groups and the most serious discussions would take place. I heard discussed such subjects as music—organ and brass band playing particularly—labour problems, the hope of an assured old age, labour in politics, socialism, and union by co-operation in order to achieve a working day of eight hours and the pay of a shilling an hour. The Independent Labour Party, I remember, was born in the shop in which I worked. (The shop was called the Nordenfelt Department after the famous breach-loading Nordenfelt gun, which was perfected at Armstrong Whitworths.)

As I look back now I realize that the mechanics were extraordinarily skilful in those days. The work was all



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

done by hand, or with a few simple machines such as the lathe, the drilling machine, the shaping, slotting and planing machine. I recall when the first American milling machine came into the shop. An expert was sent over from the United States with it to demonstrate how it worked. The machine and the man both met with derision at first, but afterwards with fear and trepidation when it was discovered that one man could often do with a milling machine what it took from three to six fitters to do by hand.

The accuracy in making gun parts and gauges was little short of marvellous. The work of the apprentices was expected to be within one ten-thousandth part of an inch; of the skilled fitters to an even finer degree of perfection. There was one man in the works who had attained such an amazing accuracy in the tool department that it was said of him that he could work to a half-millionth of an inch.

Indirectly we learned about warfare, for we found that there really were two main departments in the works—the one in which offensive weapons were built, such as guns that would pierce armour-plate, and the other which was devoted to the manufacture of armour-plate that would resist the shells made by the other section.

In the offensive department we all cheered when a new gun or shell pierced the best armour-plate that could be made, and we felt very downcast when the result of trials demonstrated that a new mixture of steel had been developed by our friendly enemies on

## APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING

the other side of the shop that resisted the best shells we could turn out. The battle was never finished. First one side was in the ascendant, then the other.

Everyone was happy when there was a war on somewhere because this meant that big orders would come through for guns and shells, and this in turn meant overtime at pay and a half for all the men. One or two hours overtime every night soon swelled the pay envelope and such overtime, as a rule, was relied upon to provide the necessary funds for the annual holiday or "wakes".

Our department was closed down at "wake time" for a whole week. Off we trooped to the seaside, usually to Blackpool, which was the nearest holiday place. Most of the big firms in the towns of northern England arranged their holiday schedules so that not too many of their workers would be in Blackpool at the same time.

\* \* \* \*

There were continual tragedies at Armstrong Whitworths. The idea of "safety first" had not yet been born and men took all kinds of chances in order to keep the machinery running, which was the important principle drummed into everybody all the time. It was considered quite a good thing when an apprentice lost the tip of a finger in some gear or belt, for it was said of him that now he would have sense enough not to lose a hand or an arm!

One day a ghastly accident occurred when I was present. A man's sleeve somehow caught in a revolving

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

pulley. The man was on a ladder, some thirty feet up. He was torn from his perch and whirled around and around at an excessive speed, while the rest of us watched spellbound, utterly powerless to help him. He was just a mass of pulp, and quite dead, when the engine was stopped and he was taken down.

On another occasion a great steam main passing from the battery of boilers into the shop burst, with three men on a platform directly underneath. They were a shocking sight to behold.

An even worse thing than this happened one day. It was the custom to shut down a certain number of boilers every Saturday night and one man was employed to clean them out during Sunday. On a certain Monday morning, when we came to work, one of the boilers that served our shop was found to have a man-hole still open. The foreman fitted the man-hole into place, tightened it up, filled the boiler with water as usual and steam was made.

Late that afternoon a woman came to the works. She said she was the wife of the boiler cleaner. She had not seen her husband since he had left on the Sunday morning to go to his job. She knew, however, that he had called on some friends who had a barrel of beer.

"No doubt your husband got drunk and is sleeping it off somewhere," the foreman told her.

Suddenly he remembered the boiler with the open man-hole. The furnace was at once drawn, the boiler cooled down and examined, and there, sure enough, the unfortunate man's bones were found inside. He had

## APPRENTICED TO ENGINEERING

fallen asleep from the effects of his drinking and had been boiled alive!

There was no workmen's compensation in those days and the man had a wife and three small children, who were left quite unprovided for. All the employees of Armstrong Whitworths, however, at once contributed to a fund in order that the woman and her three children might be supported in their great distress.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### North of England Life

**A**LL WORK at Armstrong Whitworths ceased at noon on Saturdays, and the week-end was a holiday to which everyone looked forward with keen anticipation.

The apprentices spent their week-ends in different ways. Some of them played games or watched them; some went walking or visiting in the country. For myself, I spent most of my spare time with an uncle and aunt, who lived on the outskirts of Manchester in a fine country home. I went regularly with them on Saturday afternoons to the Manchester Town Hall to hear organ recitals. By listening to these recitals, week after week, I developed a fondness for good music and found myself filled particularly with a love of Bach's Fugues. It struck me that they were somehow peculiarly logical. They reminded me, I told my aunt one day, of mathematics.

"Don't be silly," my aunt reproved me. "It's just beautiful music, that's all."

My aunt, by the way, was an extremely religious person. In common with most north of England ladies, she was most dogmatic in her religious views and was prepared to argue on religious subjects with everyone, including the vicar of her church, and even with the Bishop of Manchester, who happened to be her close

#### NORTH OF ENGLAND LIFE

friend. The Bishop was the Right Reverend James Fraser, about whom my aunt loved to tell the following story.

When the good man first became Bishop of Manchester, he tried to make friends with the coal miners. One day he came upon a group of miners who were competing to see who could tell the biggest lie. The prize was a copper kettle.

The Bishop, being drawn into the conversation, made the remark: "But I've never told a lie in my life!"

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the men, "give th' Bishop th' pot. He wins!"

My uncle was connected with the great cotton industry in Manchester, and as long as I lived in that city I saw, every Saturday night, a standard ritual performed in his home.

In the large sitting-room of the house a group of a dozen or so of my uncle's boon companions would assemble. They had a favourite brand of Scotch whiskey always on tap in a small barrel, and this was drawn off into a brown earthenware jug. The men made an inner circle around the open fireplace. Beyond them, in another circle, sat their wives, and then, in a third circle, quietly sat the younger generation of boys and girls.

A subject would be started for discussion, usually a serious one in which all might be concerned. Sometimes it was Free Trade versus Protection, or International Trade, or the merits of Disraeli and Gladstone.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Sometimes deep questions of philosophy or sociology would be debated at length. Arguments would wax warm and fast but friendship was never disturbed.

At ten-thirty a meal would be served, which was always the same. It consisted of cold ham, Cheshire cheese and bread and butter, with ale for the grown-ups to drink and milk for the children. There would also be tea for those who fancied it, but little was consumed.

Then came the inevitable whist, which everyone engaged in and enjoyed. At five to twelve the company would rise, goodbyes would be said, and by midnight the house would be quiet.

It soon stuck me that the people of Manchester, compared with the people of London and the people I had met in France, took life very seriously. They did not seem to know how to relax properly, or even how to laugh. Life was so hard, so dour for most of them. Money was so difficult to get. Thrift—thrift—that was the dominant thought in everyone's mind. Even my own uncle, who was comparatively well off, was constantly drawing to my attention the necessity for taking care of what one had and of not spending too much. He used to show me the monument to Edwin Waugh that stood in a Manchester Park, on which were written the following words: "My riches consist in the fewness of my wants." He would frequently remind his son and me and our young friends of the old adage: "If youth did know what age doth crave, many a penny would they save!"

## NORTH OF ENGLAND LIFE

One thing the working people of the north of England possessed in abundance, however, was a love of music. This exhibited itself mainly in an interest in brass bands. We had an especially good one at Armstrong Whitworths. Every Saturday afternoon there would be band concerts, and at times there would be keen competitions. The winners of these competitions, in the various regions, would be sent down to London each year to compete in the grand finals at the Crystal Palace.

There were many amusing stories told of the visits of these north of England bands to the great city of London. Some of the men had never been away from home before.

One story that has always remained particularly clear in my mind concerned the Baisley Brass Band.

This band went to the Crystal Palace to compete in the finals one year. The members of the band were taken to a London hotel.

In lining up at the desk to sign their names in the hotel register, a gentleman in front of one of the men put his name down as James Clark, LL.D.

"What does LL.D. mean?" the northern visitor asked, when his turn came to sign.

"Oh, that's a mark of distinction," the hotel clerk replied. "It means that the gentleman's a doctor of laws."

The north of England man then signed his own name—Jimmy Sidebottom, B.B.B.B.B.B.



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

"What in the world does B.B.B.B.B.B. mean?" the clerk wanted to know.

"Eh lad," answered the musician, "tha's me own mark o' distinction, don't tha' see? That means Jimmy Sidebottom, the Best Bloody Bugler in Baisley Brass Band!"

A curious incident occurred at one time in connection with our own music-loving foreman. This man had taught himself to be an accomplished performer on the great organ. He was a good pattern maker and so a fine cabinet maker too. Little by little and piece by piece he actually built a great organ against one wall of the sitting-room in his house. It took up almost the whole room. He was exceedingly proud of it and was most generous in giving recitals to groups of his friends.

The house in which he lived was rented by the week and he had occupied it for over twenty years. One day he received from the agent a week's notice to leave. Notice was also served on him that by law he could not remove the great organ, nor take it to pieces, because it was fastened to the wall and so belonged to the house.

All his fellow-employees at Armstrong Whitworths were furious at this trick that the landlord of the house was evidently trying to play on the foreman. One night, therefore, about one hundred and fifty of us marched to the landlord's house, a large mansion in its own grounds on the outskirts of Manchester.

We knocked at the door and rang the bell. A surprised butler appeared. We demanded to see the master

## NORTH OF ENGLAND LIFE

of the house and, before the butler could stop us, many of us filed into the hall.

Presently the master of the house came downstairs in his dressing-gown, wanting to know what the disturbance was all about.

We explained to him, very quietly and courteously, what his agent was proposing to do to the foreman. We told him that the organ represented ten years of hard work and of how the foreman had never had any idea that he would have to leave the house, and that, even if he did have to leave some day, that he had never dreamed he would not be able to take the organ with him. We asked the landlord how he would have liked it if he had been in the foreman's place.

It so happened that the old gentleman was a music lover himself and he was greatly upset over the whole affair. It ended up by him ordering his carriage and driving, followed by us all, to the foreman's house.

He asked to see the great organ and invited the foreman to play. As many of us as could squeezed into the house to listen. I remember vividly that the last piece the foreman played was Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus!" Quite a number of the men present were members of the famous Hallé Choir, that had recently performed the *Messiah* in Manchester, and most of the men present were familiar with the music and the words, having either sung them or listened to them each year for many years.

Gradually, one by one, the men began singing. They were joined by those on the street. People rose from

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

their beds in adjoining houses, and men and women came pouring out, thinking that the foreman and his friends had gone mad. It was a wonderful scene—the street filled with half-dressed people, at one o'clock in the morning, and the glorious strains of the great "Hallelujah Chorus!" rising to the stars. The policeman on that beat came rushing up to see what was happening, and he, too, joined in the singing.

Finally, the old gentleman addressed the gathering and said that what had been done by the agent had been without his knowledge, and that in order to show that his heart was in the right place, he would permit the foreman from henceforth to live in the house rent free, just so long as he would continue to play the organ whenever he could for the enjoyment of his fellow-workmen and their friends.

We gave the landlord three hearty cheers. Two other men and myself drove home with him in his carriage, and he gave us some very strong madeira wine to drink. It made our heads ache so much that next morning we could not go to work till noon and for that we received a lecture on the virtues of punctuality from the very foreman who had been responsible for all the excitement the night before!

\* \* \* \*

After I had been at Armstrong Whitworths for some time, I began to notice that the men were becoming strangely quiet. Their discussions at noon were more subdued and much more earnest in tone. They avoided

contact with the apprentices. There was talk of trouble with the masters. Then came rumours of an impending strike.

On a certain morning, when the whistle blew, we apprentices were the only ones who turned up for work. It was a most disagreeable position for us. We felt that we owed a duty to the shop and to the company, and yet at the same time it was hard to withstand the solemn and rather reproachful glances of the fitters and the labourers with whom we had been such good friends.

Some apprentices went out on strike with the workers. Others stayed with their jobs. There was, however, no ill feeling; no attempt was made, for instance, as is done in these modern times, to stop those from working who wished to do so.

At the time the strike occurred, I was working on two ship jobs. One was making a set of hydraulic rams, which pushed shells into the twelve-inch guns that were being made in the next department for use on the new battleship, H.M.S. *Canopus*. The other was finishing a great rudder for the *Oceanic*, which, when launched, would be the largest ship in the world, and which was being built at Harland and Wolf's in Ireland.

The manager of our department asked me and several other apprentices to stay at least until these two jobs were completed. He pointed out that it would be unpatriotic to curtail in any way the finishing of those

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

great ships, so important to England. So finish the jobs we did.

My work on the *Canopus* came vividly back to my mind when I read of the gallant stand, made in 1914 by Admiral Craddock in the South Pacific, and of how he was lost with his squadron because the *Canopus* had been unable to keep up with him.

In that same department we also made a number of naval twelve-pounder guns, and I was greatly interested, some years later in Honolulu, when visiting President Roosevelt's famous *White Fleet* that went around the world, to find on one of the American battleships four twelve-pounder guns with my own mark on them—the initials H.S. on the breach. (It was the custom, when I was an apprentice, for each apprentice or fitter, who had charge of a certain piece of work, to stamp his initials on what he had done, so that everyone would know who was responsible for any defects that might afterwards come to light.)

The strike at Armstrong Whitworths so got on my nerves that I became very unhappy indeed. The South African War had just broken out and one of my friends decided to join a Corps of Mounted Scouts. He asked me to go with him. I visited one of the managers, explained my position to him, and asked his advice. He said he thought it would be a good thing for me to go away until the trouble at the works had blown over and he told me that I would be welcomed back whenever I felt ready to return. I little knew, when I left, that I should never see Manchester again

## NORTH OF ENGLAND LIFE

until I visited it on my return to England during the Great War.

One morning I received a green badge to fasten on my arm. It had the letters "S.A.C." on it, meaning "South African Constabulary". With it came a railroad warrant and some expense money to take me to Southampton, there to embark on a ship bound for South Africa.

The special train on which I left Manchester was crowded with young men with arm bands similar to the one I wore myself. We made a non-stop journey to Southampton and embarked at once. I did not even have time to call and say goodbye to my people in London.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Boer War

WE LANDED at Cape Town in civilian clothes, our only uniform being the green band on our arms. Several thousand of us, after a few days, were formed into troops of about one hundred men each. We were then ordered to pick out a horse apiece from among a number in a corral. These horses were what were called Australian whalers. They were big, raw-boned creatures, most of them barely halter broken.

The officer in command of us called upon the Canadians and the Americans, of whom there were several in the different troops, and who were all commonly supposed to be bareback riders or broncho busters and able to manage wild horses without any trouble at all, to break in the horses. I made friends with one of the Canadians and the friendship has lasted to this day. (His name is Ned Jones and he now farms near Moosomin, Saskatchewan.) He broke in horses from early morning till late at night, and became so tired of it at last that he went on strike. "I can't break in horses for the whole blooming British Army," he said.

We were next given gear and "findings" for making our own saddles. Finally, when all was ready, we were taken by train to the middle of Cape Colony to fight against the Boers.

For over two years thereafter we were continually

## THE BOER WAR

on the move. Sometimes we were in Cape Colony, sometimes in the Transvaal, and sometimes in the Orange Free State. Sometimes we were pursuing commandoes of Boers and sometimes they were pursuing us. Occasionally we shot a few Boers and now and again they shot a few of our men—usually by sniping.

There was one young fellow in our outfit, Corporal Walker by name. He was a fine type of English boy and we all liked him very much. One day he was shot in the head and killed instantly. He was hardly disfigured at all, except for a small hole through his right eye. When we turned him over, however, we found a hole in the back of his head large enough to put a fist into. Some said that the Boers had used a dum-dum bullet, which was illegal at the time. (I mention this particular incident because it had a sequel later on.)

Sometimes we took a few prisoners and sometimes we lost a few of our own men in the same way. The Boer prisoners were of all ages, from boys of fourteen, to men of about seventy with long, white beards. We became the best of friends with the Boers as soon as we had captured them. They merely gave their word that they would not try to escape and we let them have the run of our camp. None of them ran away from our outfit.

On one occasion we captured, among the Boers, two Americans who had joined the Boer forces just for excitement, they said. Our evening amusement, up to that time, had been playing simple card games, such as Vingt-et-Un and Nap. The Americans told us that



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

these were childish games and they taught us to play poker instead. It ended up by them owning the best part of the pay of most of our soldiers. (The Americans, by the way, did the same thing with the British "Tommies" in the last War.)

The Boers were splendid riders on the short native Boer or Basuto ponies. They were also reputed to be excellent shots. One day we were discussing shooting with some of our prisoners and a match was arranged, with six people a side. I was one of those representing our own troops.

To everyone's surprise, at all the ranges up to five hundred yards we beat the Boers easily. When it came to ranges between five hundred and eight hundred yards, however, and particularly at eight hundred, they invariably won. We afterwards discovered that the reason for this was that all their lives the Boers had been hunters of the wildebeeste, and other game of the same size, only possible of approach at from five to eight hundred yards, and so the Boers had developed a great skill at these distances.

\* \* \* \*

Two outstanding experiences in South Africa impressed themselves on my youthful mind.

One was the shooting down of our troop commander, Lieutenant Myers, by a small party of Boers who appeared with a white flag. Lieutenant Myers, myself, and one other man, thinking that the Boers had come to surrender, went out to meet them. When we were



AS A FIRST-CLASS SCOUT IN THE BOER WAR



## THE BOER WAR

within two or three hundred yards of the approaching party, Lieutenant Myers ordered us to stop and he went on alone. As soon as he came up to the Boers, they started firing at him. He fell from his horse and the Boers galloped away. When we arrived on the spot we found that he was quite dead and that, for some unknown reason, the Boers had laid on his forehead an English penny.

A complaint was made to General Botha and we heard he had had the men arrested and that an enquiry had taken place. The defence had been that Lieutenant Myers, a short time before, had ordered his troops to open up a certain grave, in which was buried the father of the burgher who had shot Lieutenant Myers.

It was true that Lieutenant Myers had ordered the opening up of the grave, but he had done this because it had been reported to him that guns had been buried in that cemetery and the hiding of guns in coffins was known to be a favourite practice of the Boers.

In this particular instance, however, Lieutenant Myers and his men had been surprised by a Boer Commando approaching, and had been obliged to beat a hasty retreat. The grave they had opened had contained a recently buried old Boer and they had had no time to rebury him. The burgher who had killed Lieutenant Myers claimed that he had done so to avenge the desecration to his father. We heard later that General Botha had ordered the burgher to be shot for this breach of international law.

The other incident was when General Botha himself

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

came, under a white flag, through our camp on his way to negotiate for peace at Vereeniging in 1902.

A sentry reported one day that a Boer Cape cart, flying a small white flag, could be seen approaching across the veldt. Captain Brown, then in charge of our company, and four or five of us, galloped out to meet it. We were astonished when one of the four men in the Cape cart turned out to be General Botha himself.

General Botha was just like his pictures. He had a round, brown smiling face, and wore a short pointed beard. On his head was a wide sombrero hat. We all thought he was a splendid specimen of a man.

General Botha spent the night with us and I was one of those asked into Captain Brown's tent to meet him. We all chatted together for some time.

On another occasion there was great excitement in our camp when we were ordered to practise forming a guard of honour because we were to be visited by the great Lord Kitchener. In a short time Lord Kitchener arrived with two members of his staff, General Birdwood and General Ian Hamilton. General Kitchener looked every inch a soldier. He had a long, sandy moustache and sharp, piercing eyes.

"I bet he's a first-class shot," I remember hearing our sergeant-major say. "Men with eyes like that always shoot straight."

\* \* \* \*

By this time I had become a first-class trooper, in charge of the troop scouts. Scouting work I found to be very enjoyable indeed. I was relieved of all ordinary

## THE BOER WAR

duties and was particularly glad to be free of the long and fatiguing four-hour guards at night, when one had to stand on the veldt behind a few strands of barbed wire watching for the enemy. The wire had empty bully beef tins, with a few pebbles inside them, tied to it so that one could hear, by the cans rattling, if anyone crept up and touched the wire.

At dusk each night I would start off with a native—a Basuto as a rule, for they were splendid scouts—and we would ride twenty or thirty miles, usually to scout around some Boer farmhouse where it was suspected the Boers might be assembling. We would ride up quite close to the house, dismount and tie our horses in a gulley or behind a small kopje, and then creep quietly nearer and nearer on foot. For the most part we would find the farmhouses quite empty, but on one occasion the native and myself were suddenly surprised by rifle shots coming from the windows of the supposedly-empty house we were approaching.

We returned the fire and soon saw two Boers slip out. They jumped on their horses and galloped swiftly away. We went into the house and found a Boer there who had been shot through the leg. He was a lad of about fifteen and he was crying bitterly.

The Basuto brought up our horses and we managed to get the boy back to our camp, where he received first aid. It so happened that he was able to give us valuable information about the Boer Commando which he had recently left in order to go on leave to visit his home.

We were in this same vicinity when peace finally

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

came. One day, finding time hanging heavily on our hands, a friend and myself "inspanned" four mules to a Cape cart and went over the identical route that the Basuto scout and I had followed on the adventure just described.

At the farmhouse we found the lad, who had been released some time before, with his father and mother and his sister, a young girl of about seventeen. The farmhouse was their home and they had returned to it as soon as the fighting had ceased.

I had not seen any white girls for over two years and so this young woman appeared very beautiful to me. She was as shy as a gazelle, and my friend and I both fell in love with her and vowed to see her again.

The burgher told us that he had heard that the English shot all their captives and said that he was grateful to us for sparing his son's life. He produced some Cape wine, and some schnapps, with which to entertain us. The mixture proved too potent for us, however, and we both went to sleep and did not waken up until the next morning.

As soon as we arrived back in camp the sergeant-major arrested us, as was his duty. The crime sheet, I well remember, bore the following charge against us: "Charged with making improper use of a Cape cart."

This crime was the source of much merriment with Army headquarters. Innumerable communications came back to Captain Brown, demanding to know the exact nature of the "improper use" that my friend and I had made of the cart. We were fined one pound each,

## THE BOER WAR

but this sum was afterwards remitted when it was discovered that there was no such crime in the Army lexicon as "making improper use" of a Cape cart!

My friend and I never saw the pretty little Boer girl again. In the excitement of going away we forgot all about her. I have often wondered if she ever thought of us and wondered why we did not visit her again as we had promised.

\* \* \* \*

When we arrived back in London I received a medal with five bars, one for each of the engagements I had been in. I felt very proud, walking about London, still wearing my uniform with its decorations and my smart Baden-Powell hat.

One day I had a most astonishing experience. A man got into conversation with me in a restaurant and said that he was a Canadian. He took me to a Club in Pall Mall and told me that he would like me to act as his guide around London.

Even though I had been born in London, I had seen very little of it, and so for several days thereafter I went sight-seeing with my new Canadian friend, who paid all my expenses. I enjoyed myself very much.

One afternoon this man insisted that we climb to the top of the King William Monument, a long straight tower having a winding staircase with many hundreds of steps. Very few people ever went up this tower. On the top there was a platform, with an iron railing around it, from which one could get a good view of that part of London.



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

We found an old gentleman up there who immediately entered into conversation with us.

"I see you come from South Africa," he remarked, looking at me.

"Yes," I replied. "I have just come back from the war."

"I had a boy out there," the old gentleman said, and the tears came into his eyes. "He was killed near a place called Standerton. He was with the South African Constabulary, too."

"With what troop?" I asked.

"Troop C," he replied.

"Why, that was my troop," I exclaimed. I asked the lad's name.

"His name was Corporal Walker," the old gentleman said. "He was my only son."

"I saw him killed," I said. (It was the young lad whose death I have described at the beginning of this chapter!)

The old gentleman had a large estate just outside London and he insisted on my Canadian acquaintance and I going down to stay with him for a week or so, which we did. He was never tired of talking to me about his son and asking me questions as to how he had died. I was able to tell him what a fine soldier his boy had been and of how he had been recommended for a commission just before he had been killed. This news seemed to comfort the old gentleman very much. "He was my gift to England," he said. "I'd give my own life, too, any time it was asked for, for this is a great land!"

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Off to the Klondike

AFTER the Boer War I had fully intended to go back to my job at Armstrong Whitworths, but two things happened that made me want to go away from England.

One was the death, that Christmas, of my aunt in Manchester. My uncle then decided to retire from his business and to go to live in the little village in Dorsetshire where he had been born. I never saw him again.

The other reason was that the gentleman I had met, who came from Canada, had fired my imagination to go to that country.

"Get a farm in the West," he persistently told me. "That's the thing to do. Western Canada will be the granary of the Empire one day. Strike out on your own now. Canada needs men like you."

My mother was sorry to see me go but gave me her blessing and her good wishes for my future. Off to Canada I went. I well remember that my special army ticket from London to Summerberry, in what is now Saskatchewan, only cost me two pounds ten!

I stayed with my friend Ned Jones (who had broken in the horses in South Africa), for about two months on his farm. I had come out with the idea of becoming a wheat farmer, like Ned Jones was himself, but the more I looked into the matter, the less of a future

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

wheat-farming seemed to promise for me. (The price of wheat was then very low.)

Just about this time, too, came news of a further gold strike in the Klondike, so when March came I set out for Vancouver en route to the land of gold. On Ned's advice I sewed a ten-dollar bill into my under-shirt—for last emergencies, Ned said.

I boarded a boat in Seattle for Skagway, intending to go from there over the White Pass to White Horse, and from thence on a raft down the river to Dawson City.

On the steamboat going to Skagway I met a mining engineer, who planned to erect a quartz mill in the Atlin district, where he had discovered a rich vein of gold-bearing quartz. He persuaded me to go to Atlin with him, to assist in the erection of the mill.

At Skagway I stepped right into the middle of a life that was entirely new to me. Here were the open bars, with gambling rooms attached, in which poker and blackjack were played twenty-four hours a day for any stakes that one liked to put up—the sky was the limit! Behind the gambling rooms were the dance halls, complete with ladies the exact prototype of "the lady called Lou". One was supposed to dance with these girls and then take them to the bar for a drink. Drinks were a dollar each. (I learned afterwards that the drinks served to the girls were nothing more than cold tea!)

I had very little money to spend on such frivolities, so did not indulge.

## OFF TO THE KLONDIKE

We visited Soapy Smith's grave and I stood a drink to a man who said he had been present when Soapy Smith was shot. He told us of the exciting duel on the wharf that ended the famous bandit's life. Some of the men up there seemed to think that Soapy Smith had not been such a bad fellow after all, because while he took from those who had plenty, his hand was ever open to the miner or the prospector who was down on his luck. Others, however, branded Smith as a common outlaw or thief.

The walking trip over the White Pass was very beautiful. I had never seen such magnificent scenery before. There were high, snow-capped mountains on every side and the air was keen and exhilarating. One felt eager for adventure and life.

We arrived at a roadhouse at Log Cabin late one afternoon. Six of us went to our bunks soon after supper in order to get up early in the morning and make a good start for Atlin. A report had come through that the ice on the lakes was going out. We had a seventy-five mile walk across the ice on this chain of lakes and we planned to do it in two days.

The next morning we were up before daybreak. We started out, each equipped with overshoes and with moderately-filled packs.

We had walked but a short distance when we met the mail runner, with his sleigh drawn by eight dogs. He told us that we had better turn back. "The ice is going out rapidly," he warned.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

We felt, however, that we had come too far to do this and determined to push on.

After a few more hours of travel, we realized that we had made a mistake in not taking his advice, for the ice on which we were now walking was becoming more and more covered with water. Desperately we pushed on, determined to make the whole march without stopping for rest or sleep.

Two of our party were experienced northern miners, and it was agreed that each of these men in turn should break trail for a mile or so. We would all try to keep up a pace of four miles an hour.

I can only say that it was a hideous experience. Nothing that I had endured in Africa compared with it. Every muscle in my body ached and screamed for rest. Now and again one or other of our party would make an excuse to sit down, but at once he would be roughly handled and urged to proceed. I realized how easy it would be to sink down gently into death.

We marched all day and all night with but very brief stops at long intervals to partake of a little food and water. Our leader had insisted, when he had found out that "the going" would be bad, that anyone who had liquor on them should throw it away. To drink liquor on a march like this, he warned us, would be to ask for death. And so we stuck to water, and ate the chocolate bars and sandwiches that we had bought at the rest house.

Towards the end we were all half unconscious with fatigue and moved more like automatons than

## OFF TO THE KLONDIKE

human beings. The water was beginning to lap up about our ankles and we could see where the ice had broken away from the banks on the lake shores. Even if we had been able to win to the shore, however, it would have been of no avail, for there was no way of getting through the dense forests that lined the lake side.

Finally we saw the town of Atlin ahead of us, on the bank of Atlin Lake. A short distance more of struggling through icy water up to our waists and we were on the mainland. We dropped down on the dry ground and fell asleep at once.

The next thing we knew we were being awakened by some people, who were lifting us into a sleigh pulled by a team of horses. We were driven to the combination hotel-bar-dance hall-and-gambling house, where we were put to bed. Never was bed or sleep so welcome! We slept for more than twenty-four hours before we wakened up, and it was several days before we could do any more than leave our beds to crawl downstairs for a meal.

After a week's rest, however, I felt "as fit as a fiddle" again, and eager to be at mining work.

The material for the quartz mill had arrived during the winter, and soon we had it set up and running. The stamps fell, the ore was crushed, and I had my first sight of gold. One could never mistake gold; it was quite different from anything else. The quartz was known as free-milling quartz and the gold had a bright, beautiful, yellow colour.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

In a few weeks, however, no more gold appeared and it was found that the vein had "pinched out".

Inasmuch as no one had any reserves of cash, as soon as the gold stopped coming, operations had to cease. This, as far as I know, was the only mill that was ever erected in that area or that has ever since been set up there.

When the mill shut down, I had three hundred dollars of pay owing to me—and the Company had no funds! I went into the little town of Goldrush nearby, utterly disheartened and wondering what on earth I should do now. Board and lodging cost two dollars and a half a day and I did not have a cent.

With some trepidation I told my story to the man who owned the hotel.

"Don't worry about being broke," he said, patting me on the shoulder in a kindly way. "You'll soon find something to do. Meanwhile you can live here as long as you like. You can pay me when you get a job." He gave me a searching look and then went on: "You're English, aren't you? Well, I'll introduce you to some English boys when they come in from their claims on Spruce Creek. Maybe they will be able to help you out."

In a few days he called me over to where a group of men were standing by the desk.

"I want to introduce you to 'Swift Water Bill' and Charlie Straker," he said. "They're English like yourself." (Straker was not Charlie's real name, but I will

## OFF TO THE KLONDIKE

use it because his own family name is too well known in England.)

I thought that "Swift Water Bill" was one of the finest-looking young men I had ever seen. He was six feet tall and looked like a Viking of old. Charlie, however, was thin and only of medium height. He had quite small wrists and ankles, almost like a girl's. His face was refined and scholarly-looking, and I thought that he appeared to be very young and frail to be in a place like this. Little did I know Charlie Straker! He had had perhaps one of the most adventurous careers of any young man in the Klondike and possessed the courage and endurance of a lion. His story, when I heard it later, sounded like a tale from a book. But more of Charlie anon.

"This young lad is looking for a job," the hotel keeper announced. "I thought perhaps you fellows could give him something to do."

"We'll take care of him," Charlie Straker said. He turned to me with a friendly smile. "Come to Spruce Creek with us, youngster. We'll find something for you."

So off I went with them to Spruce Creek, and the next morning it was arranged that I should go into partnership with an experienced miner named Pete Destrey, who was looking for someone to help him work his claim. A formal statement was made out that I was Pete's equal partner, share and share alike, and then I had to go into Atlin to buy a Free Miner's



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Certificate and to register my partnership with Pete Destrey at the office of the Gold Commissioner.

I felt very happy now that my mining life in the Klondike had really begun.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Gold Mining on Spruce Creek

**M**Y NEW partner, Pete Destrey, was a most experienced miner. I have never seen a man since, nor even heard of one, who could handle a pick, hammer and drill, and use dynamite, as expertly as he could.

When I joined up with him, Pete had just driven a tunnel into the high hill of Spruce Creek. It was some twenty feet above the creek level, with the bottom of the tunnel, or drift as it was called, on bedrock. It was into a kind of red cemented gravel, called conglomerate. There was, Pete told me, enough gold in the gravel to pay a man good wages, and there was a chance also of striking an old channel, where the pay might be really rich.

The tunnel was some six feet wide and five feet high, with an untimbered arched roof. It was driven to the limits of the claim, some two hundred and fifty feet straight back into the hill.

Wheelbarrows were used to bring out the dirt, which was simply dumped over the sloping side of the creek. Pete figured there was sufficient pay dirt in each wheelbarrow load to bring from five to ten dollars a day to each of us.

I think that one of the greatest thrills I ever had in my life was when, at the end of the first week, Pete Destrey said:

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

"Now we'll clean up and see what we've got!"

The method used for cleaning up the dump—or sluicing up, as it was called—was to shovel the gravel we had wheeled out of the drift into a line of sluice boxes.

Our first week's work produced over six and a half ounces of fine yellow gold, which, said Pete, the gold buyer in town would purchase from us for sixteen dollars an ounce. This meant that we would make just over nine dollars a day each for our week's efforts.

"Not bad!" Pete remarked casually. "But we ought to make a whole lot more. An ounce a day per man," he told me, "would be considered respectable pay."

In a short time I felt myself to be a fairly capable placer miner.

We went on working steadily, and one day struck some rich patches. Now we began to take out, not an ounce a day, but up to two ounces a day each.

When our tunnel was driven in as far as the end of the claim, we drove in tunnels at right angles, a hundred and twenty-five feet each way. Our pay for the next few weeks was less per day, however, because we had much longer distances to push the wheelbarrows and so could not handle as much gravel.

The usual practice on the creek, after these side tunnels had been driven to the limits of the claim, was to come back towards the front of the claim, about twenty feet, and then drive in still other tunnels, leaving pillars of dirt, some fifteen feet wide, to support the mine. Then, when the whole claim—some two

## GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

hundred and fifty feet square—had been thoroughly tunnelled in this way, it was the custom, if the “pay” warranted it, to go back again and do what was known as “gophering” or scraping around the base of the pillars. This would go on until parts of the roof would begin to “sluff” or fall in.

Pete, however, conceived a new idea. Instead of coming back and making further tunnels, he erected a line of posts, some six inches in diameter, and made from the pine trees that abounded on the mountain sides. These posts he placed about four feet apart down the centre of the tunnels. A flat spruce cap—which was a piece of timber about six inches wide, three feet long and three inches thick—was then placed on top of each post and against the roof, and the post was driven home with a heavy sledge hammer, so that the roof was solidly supported at that point by the post and cap.

Now Pete would begin deliberately to mine the dirt straight towards the front of the claim. When we had taken out about four feet, another set of posts would be put in. This would be repeated until the chamber, supported by the posts and caps alone, would be some fifty feet deep. Next Pete would drill holes in a number of the posts up to within ten feet of the face and he would then place small dynamite charges in each post and blow up the posts. Down would come the roof, and the whole hill would quietly settle, and do what was technically called “take the weight off the face”. Then the mining method would be continued,

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

and after every fifty feet of open space, the posts would be blown up and the roof let down.

There was considerable discussion on the creek about this new kind of operation. Some thought it entirely too dangerous. There was, at the time, a small local newspaper published on a hand press at Atlin, and the editor of this paper waxed very wrathful concerning Pete's novel scheme, saying that we were asking for trouble. It was even suggested that the North West Mounted Police, when they came around next time, should be asked to stop our mining operations. Appeals were made to the Gold Commissioner, but he, however, could find nothing in the Mining Act to stop us from attempting to commit suicide, as he put it, if we wished to do so. The truth was that the plan worked—but only because Pete was an amazingly skilful miner and knew exactly where he could take a chance and where he could not.

When the cold weather came, the work went on as usual, excepting that double doorways were installed at the entrances to the mines. The doors were placed in the tunnels, about ten feet apart. When the temperature was as low as sixty or seventy below zero outside, we would still work in our shirt-sleeves a short distance underground. Fifty feet inside it was as warm as in summer.

Every few minutes, one of us would go out with a barrow-load of dirt. We would burst through the two doors and emerge, still in our shirt-sleeves and hatless, into a temperature of perhaps sixty below, a difference

## GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

of at least a hundred and twenty degrees in a few seconds. The barrow-load would be dumped and back inside we would go. It was always a source of wonder to me how the human body could stand it, yet in winter-time we were all doing this every day on the creek and there was very little sickness that I ever heard of and certainly never a cold.

In the extremely cold weather, the dirt froze as soon as it was dumped, and the gravel was dumped out until the pile rose up level with the bottom of the tunnel. Then it would be spread out fan-shape, until it extended oftentimes on to the icy surface of the creek itself. As one looked up the creek, with twenty or thirty of these mines working, there was evidence of a veritable hive of industry beneath the hill. Hot air, looking like steam, mounted in white plumes from the entrances to the drifts, and the great dumps of yellowish-coloured gravel in front of the tunnel doors grew larger every day.

Towards April, the weather warmed up again, and in May the snow began to melt. Now all work in the tunnels stopped, and feverish preparations were made to clean or "sluice up" the piles of dirt, the result of the winter's operations.

As water was needed for sluicing, nothing could be done until the ice on the creek broke up and the water began to flow. At the same time it had to be remembered that not long after the water would begin to flow, the melted snow would begin to run down from

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

the mountains, and "high water" would come tearing down the creek.

A good deal of our dirt pile, or "dump", as the miners called these piles, was out on the ice of the creek, and much of it was only a foot or two above the normal water level of the creek. All of it, however, would be far below the height to which the water would rise when it came rushing down, like a veritable tidal wave, when "high water" occurred.

As a rule, one had about twenty days from the time sluicing started until "high water" arrived, and so it was a matter of working day and night, with all the help that one could possibly hire. There was usually sufficient help available, for prospectors would come in and odd men would drift to the creeks to help with the spring sluicing and to earn good pay. Wages for these extra men were always ten dollars a day and board. Often some enterprising men would come to the creek, erect a large tent or marquee, and cook and serve meals during the busy clean-up period. Two and a half dollars a day was the price set for three meals, but good, fine, generous meals they were. Pete and I abandoned cooking for ourselves and joined the boarding-house, as did most of the other miners on the creek, in order to save time.

It took us fourteen days, with about four extra men to help, to sluice up our own dump. We were shovelling, it seemed to me, all day long and most of the night. We cleaned up the sluice boxes every third day, and the

## GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

riffles in the bottom of the boxes were a sight to behold—all glittering with gold everywhere!

As soon as Pete caught sight of the first "clean up", he said:

"Well, Harry, we've done well! An ounce a day per man, I guess, is what we've made on our winter's work." And so it proved to be.

As soon as the sluicing of our own dump was finished, all hands were set to work taking down the lumber sluice boxes and their supports and carrying them to a place of safety higher up the creek bank, where "high water" could not reach; then off we would go to give some help to neighbouring miners who still had dirt to sluice. It was the custom for everyone who had finished his own dump to turn to and help another miner. For this help one never even thought of expecting any pay. There was a splendid spirit of co-operation among the miners on the creeks.

Finally the last shovelful went over the riffles, and the last sluice box was moved to safety. A few days later, down the "high water" came. It was veritably a "wall of water", seeming to tower some five to six feet high. A hundred feet or so behind the first wall came another, rushing along with a terrific roar. All the gravel that had gone through the sluice boxes from the mines, and that had fallen in the creek bed, was washed away.

Most miners endeavoured to have their "tailings", as they called the dirt and gravel after it had gone through the sluice boxes, fall, not into the creek, to be washed



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

away by "high water", but on to a raised piece of ground, so that during the course of the summer it could be worked over again. It seemed that always some gold would go over the riffles, and good "pay" could often be made from re-sluicing the "tailings" if one had nothing better to do.

Pete and I had managed to save most of our own "tailings" and they were now in a dump about as big as our original dump had been.

However, we had other work to do that summer, and so when an old prospector came along, offering to sluice our "tailings" for us on a "lay" or lease—which meant that he would pay us one-fifth of what he got—we were glad to let him do it. We had an additional reason for this, which was that we wanted the land cleared so that some day we could drive in a new tunnel near the spot the "tailings" now occupied.

The prospector was very old, so Pete and I spent several days rigging up our sluice boxes for him to use. He shovelled leisurely all one day, and at night made a "clean up" and found a nugget, intermixed with some quartz, as big as two fists put together. It contained over six hundred dollars worth of gold!

With that the old scoundrel quit! The nugget, it appeared, had rolled with some rocks over our fine riffles and we had lost it.

We felt quite sick when the old man left, particularly as we could not find anyone else to clean up our "tailings". Eventually we had to do the laborious work ourselves. The "tailings" were not so easily shovelled as

## GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

the original dump, and it took a precious month of our time to get rid of them. In the end, all we made out of our hard work was a little less than a dollar a day. The big nugget found by the old prospector the first day was the only real gold left in the whole dump!

\* \* \* \*

When the next spring came, Pete decided to go creek mining. As we could not afford to buy a good creek claim, Pete proposed that we take a "lay" or enter into a partnership with "Swift Water Bill", (Billy Alliott), Charlie Straker, and Billy's brother, Alex, who had recently come in from "Outside". We were to help work a creek claim which these lads owned.

Billy Alliott was an experienced creek miner and a skilful mechanic. In creek mining, part of the bed of the creek is dammed off, in order that one may dig down through what was the creek bottom to bedrock without having to handle too much water.

This work necessitated some kind of power. At the time I speak of, there were no gasoline engines on the creek and only one steam engine. The method used to produce power was to construct a water wheel. Alex Alliott was the acknowledged expert on the construction of water wheels, and he made for us a very efficient machine, some eighteen feet in diameter and about six feet wide. By means of a series of pulleys and ropes, a water pump was driven by the water wheel, which pumped out the seepage water that had come

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

into the pit in the bed of the creek where we were working.

Next Alex constructed a tall mast and boom, which could be moved around or raised and lowered. Ropes were run from a pulley on the water wheel over blocks in the boom, and a large bucket, that would hold some three or four wheelbarrow-loads of dirt and rocks, could be swung around and lowered and raised in the vicinity of where we were working.

With picks and crowbars we would dig out the gravel down to bedrock, and this would be shovelled into the bucket, which was then raised and dumped into a dump box on the end of a set of sluices. The gold was saved when it passed over the sluice box riffles.

It took sometimes weeks of hard work to get rid of the overburden on top of the layer of gold-bearing gravel, which rested a few inches thick only on bedrock. If one were fortunate, the gravel might be very rich indeed. From one to two or three thousand dollars worth of gold a day was quite common for an ordinary creek mine, after one reached bedrock, and an especially rich spot would sometimes "clean up" to as high as twenty thousand dollars a day! Creek-mining operations, however, were exceedingly costly, for many men had to be hired at high wages. There was a big element of chance in it, too, and creek mining usually turned out to be either a feast or a famine.

I have often heard it said that more wealth is poured into gold mining than ever is taken out of it. It seems to me that, in the main, this is true, especially in the

## GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

north. Very seldom was it, when I was there, that a miner who had done well reached the "Outside" with the gold he had made. As a rule he invested it in other claims on other creeks, and he usually lost it all in the end. The people who appeared finally to have the real benefit of gold mining, so far as I saw, were those who supplied goods, food and amusements to the miners—the shopkeepers, hotel owners, gamblers, "sporting ladies", and so forth.

\* \* \* \*

I have said that Pete was extraordinarily expert with dynamite. The following story, incredible as it may sound to some, is nevertheless absolutely true.

The naturally cemented gravel of the hill in which Pete and I were working that first winter, was too tough to be mined by the pick, and so it had to be blasted out. The procedure was to drill several holes, about three feet deep each, into the face of the drift. These were then charged with dynamite, and the dynamite was set off. Each shot would blow out some three feet of dirt from the face.

We had dug a hole in the hill-side near our cabin in which to store our case of dynamite. Dynamite, however, freezes at a quite high temperature, and naturally, in winter-time, it was always frozen. Before we could work with it, it had to be thawed out.

The usual method for thawing out dynamite was to construct a hot water heater. A square can, usually a five-gallon kerosene can, was fitted with a partition

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

set about three-quarters of the way up from the bottom. This partition had holes punched out in it and on it would be placed the sticks of dynamite, which were about one inch in diameter and eight inches long.

The bottom of the can would have a few inches of water placed in it. Then the can would be set over a fire, the water would be heated, and the steam from the water, rising through the holes in the partition, would gently thaw out the dynamite.

This method, however, consumed considerable time, and experienced miners would often find ways of their own to thaw dynamite out more quickly. These quicker methods, of course, usually involved taking certain risks.

I have seen miners, who wanted dynamite thawed out in a hurry, actually take a stick between their two index fingers and pass and repass it through the flame of a lighted candle until it was soft. Occasionally the dynamite exploded and a man would lose his life.

Pete had a better and, he said, a safer method than this. At night, just as we were going to bed, Pete would place in the oven of our stove, after the fire had died down, about eighteen sticks of dynamite—the next day's ration. The gentle warmth of the dying fire would gradually thaw out the dynamite, which would be ready for use the following morning. The procedure then was to remove the dynamite carefully from the stove, wrap it in a piece of woollen blanket, and carry it quickly down to the mine before it had a chance to freeze again.

## GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

It was Pete's turn, one morning, to make breakfast. He had, however, made a visit to the town of Goldrush the night before and had imbibed a trifle too freely, and so had awakened late with such a bad headache that he was hardly in his right mind.

In order to make the breakfast fire quickly, Pete piled wood into the stove and then committed what was an unpardonable crime in the North; he poured kerosene on the wood to make it burn.

The kerosene went off with a loud bang and flames spread over the stove. We thought the shack would catch on fire, but fortunately the flames subsided and Pete went ahead cooking the breakfast.

All at once, however, through the cracks in the oven door came a cloud of greenish-yellow smoke.

"My God!" Pete cried. "The powder! It's caught on fire!"

(I had duly, the night before, placed the usual eighteen sticks of dynamite in the oven to thaw out. We had both forgotten them!)

Now there is nothing in the world quite so sensitive and dangerous as burning dynamite. At any instant it is likely to explode. The stamping of a foot on the floor, the banging of a door, even a loud shout has been known to set off burning dynamite. Eighteen sticks of dynamite, exploding in our cabin, would have blown Pete and me and the cabin all over the creek!

Pete motioned to me with his hand. "Out! Out!"

With our hearts beating fast we crept quietly to the door. Gently we turned the handle, opened the

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

door and stepped outside. It was icy in the snow in one's bare feet!

"Well, we've made it!" Pete gasped.

"What now?" I wanted to know. "The shack will go up and we'll be ruined. All we own in the world is inside."

"Listen, Harry," Pete said, in an earnest tone. "I'd just as soon be killed as lose everything I have, wouldn't you? Let's take a chance and try to get the dynamite out?"

I stared at him in astonishment. "Well . . ." I began.

But before I could say any more, Pete had gone back into the shack. I saw him gingerly open the oven door and edge a stick of dynamite gently into the palm of his mittened hand. Walking cautiously, he carried the burning stick out and laid it softly in the snow. The snow, of course, quickly extinguished it.

"Come on, Harry," he urged. "Help me get it all out!"

I went in and took a stick out of the oven myself. I carried it outside with my heart hammering against my ribs. I laid it down in the snow near the first one. It went out.

Pete and I made nine trips to the oven apiece. It probably took us only a few minutes to do the entire job. But it seemed to me like years!

When the sticks were laid in eighteen little white graves in the snow, their fires now all extinguished, Pete and I collapsed.

GOLD MINING ON SPRUCE CREEK

"I need a good stiff drink," Pete said, after a while.

"I could do with one myself," I agreed.

Off we went to a neighbour's shack, where we told our story with relish and received a big drink of rum each.

We did no work that morning and neither did anyone else. The news of what had happened spread up and down the creek and miners came from far and near to see us and to talk with us about it. One highly-experienced powder man on the creek said to me:

"I never thought I'd live to see anything like that done with dynamite. Your chances were one in a million of getting it out without losing your lives. I'd never have tried it myself!"

"I'd never have tried it either," Pete admitted, "but I sure don't want to go broke just now for a special reason."

(Pete was in the throes of courting a widow, of whom more anon.)



## CHAPTER NINE

### Daily Life in the North

**WE** HAD some very happy times on Spruce Creek. The work was hard, of course, but it was healthy and interesting and often exciting as well.

We lived simply. The food was plain and wholesome and we had plenty of it. It was usually cooked by ourselves. New-comers, who were not expert, made baking-powder bannocks. One mixed flour and water to a stiff dough, added a certain amount of baking powder and salt, then shaped the dough into round loaves, about eight inches in diameter and two inches thick, and baked them in the oven or fried them in a pan. There was also the more quickly-prepared flap-jack, which consisted merely of a little dough and water and baking powder, perhaps a little canned milk if it was available, and at odd times also an egg broken into the mixture. The batter was then fried.

Experienced miners were not satisfied with these crude forms of bannocks or pancakes and soon learned to make real "sourdough" bread, which was bread much the same as the baker or housewife makes it, excepting that instead of yeast a little "sourdough" was used as a "starter" to ferment the dough. Some of the "sourdough" was kept over from batch to batch.

It usually took a year or so before a new miner was able to make satisfactory "sourdough" bread. When

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

he could do so he was called a "sourdough" instead of a "cheechako", the latter name being given to newcomers.

The usual meat dish was a "Mulligan" or stew. It consisted of pieces of meat cut up fine, with onions and vegetables added—dried carrots and dried potatoes in winter-time, and fresh ones in summer-time. The whole would be seasoned with pepper, salt, a little mustard, and any other spices that happened to be on hand. It was put into a frying-pan with enough water to cover and gently simmered for several hours. It was an appetizing and satisfying dish.

Fried bacon was a common standby and it was particularly good because of the energy-giving fat it contained. Maple syrup was usually on hand, too, as well as the inevitable rice, raisins, prunes and dried apples. Canned milk and cream were in everyone's cupboard.

In summer, supplies to last a week or two could be obtained at the nearest settlement. Sometimes Indians would come around with fish. There were quite a number of grouse in late summer and fall and these could be shot with a .22 rifle. (It was considered unsportsmanlike to shoot grouse with a shot-gun, for grouse, like ptarmigan, and indeed all other birds of the north, where mankind is scarce, were quite friendly and could often be knocked down by hand with a stick.)

Occasionally the odd hare would be shot, and this game would provide a welcome variation for the pot.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

If work permitted, some of us would sometimes go off after moose or cariboo, or mountain sheep. Miners, however, were notoriously lazy when it came to "packing" anything of considerable weight, unless it was on a prospecting trip, so there was very little moose or cariboo hunting; the miners preferred to buy their meat from the Indians. Moose meat was always sold for a set price of ten cents a pound. One became very tired of it, however, and beef was much preferred, but since beef had to be brought in from Vancouver or Seattle, and freighted over the White Pass, it was exceedingly expensive and usually cost as high as sixty cents a pound.

In winter the meat would be hung outside to freeze and the rest of the provisions would be stored in a small hole dug below the shack floor. Every two or three days enough meat for a day or so would be hacked off with a sharp axe or saw and brought into the shack to thaw out. The chips, or "sawdust", were carefully saved for making soup.

It was the custom with two partners for one to "knock off" work three-quarters of an hour ahead of the other, go to the shack and prepare the meal. On a cold winter's night it was pleasant to walk from the mine, just as dusk was falling, and to see the bright light of the lamp shining through the shack window, a tall plume of white smoke rising from the chimney, and to be met at the door with warm air and appetizing smells.

After supper, the partner who had not prepared the

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

meal washed the dishes and put them away, and the one whose turn it had been to cook cleaned up the shack for the night, split kindling-wood and laid out materials for the next morning's breakfast.

As soon as these duties were done, each would roll into his bunk. The bunks were made ship-fashion, one above the other fastened against the wall. Each bunk had a little wooden shelf projecting from it, which formed a stand for a candle. Most of one's reading was done in bed.

I had taken in with me a complete set of Shakespeare, mainly to have my old friend Falstaff near me, and while I was in the north I also managed to get hold of a number of good books, among them, I remember, some bound volumes of *The Spectator*, containing the essays of Addison, Swift and Steele, Lamb's *Essays*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, *The Compleat Angler*, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey*. The boys on the creek were fond of Uncle Toby and of Corporal Trim, and would often call on me and get me to read a chapter or two about these characters to them.

How comfortable and happy we were at night in our warm little shack! A few minutes would be spent recounting the events of the day; then we would read for a while and finally lay our heads on our pillows to sleep soundly till morning. Many a night we both fell asleep with our candles still burning, so tired out we would be.

Because of this habit of reading by candlelight, my

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

partner, Pete, once had a rather distressing experience.

Pete, it must be explained, was a man of about forty-five. He was not a bad-looking fellow but unfortunately the top of his head was completely bald. He had, however, a ring of black hair around the edge of his cranium that made him look like a monk.

Pete's home was in Seattle and he was becoming tired of being a miner and wanted soon to settle down. He had been paying attention for some time to a widow who kept a boarding-house in Seattle. His idea was to marry her eventually, retire from his hard northern life, and enjoy an easy old age living on the widow's boarding-house earnings.

It appeared, however, that several other men had the same idea as Pete, and so he met with considerable competition. The widow liked Pete well enough, she said, but she had more than once passed some rather pointed remarks on his lack of hair.

Pete determined, the winter I was with him, to try to make his hair grow. The English papers I was receiving advertised a hair-restorer called "Tatcho". One day, however, somebody wrote to the paper saying that the famous "Tatcho" was nothing more or less than plain white kerosene. Pete thereupon conceived the notion that he would rub his head every night with kerosene, and see if that would make his hair grow. He did this and for the whole winter he smelled like an oil well.

One night Pete fell asleep in the bottom bunk with his candle still alight. After a while his head fell for-

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

ward and, being liberally soaked with kerosene, it caught on fire.

I was suddenly awakened by the most excruciating yells coming from the lower bunk. Looking down I saw Pete's head ablaze. I had the presence of mind to throw my blanket over his head. This extinguished the flames, but alas, the small fringe of hair that my poor partner had so doted on was gone! We rubbed his head with bacon grease, which was the best substitute we had for butter, but despite this a nasty scab came and for a long time Pete's head was a shocking sight.

At last the scab came off. Lo and behold, Pete had begun to grow hair! We used to have frequent arguments as to whether it was from the effects of the kerosene or from the effects of the burn!

Did Pete win the widow? I am forced to relate that he did not. She had promised to marry him if he would invest two thousand dollars in her boarding-house. Pete finally acquired that amount in gold dust and sent it down to her. The next year, with his new crop of hair, he went to Seattle himself to marry her, only to find that she had already married another man.

As Pete had no legal evidence of his investment, he had to chalk off the loss of two thousand dollars to experience!

\* \* \* \*

No work was done on the creek during the weekends. Saturday nights we would wash and brush up and go *en masse* into Goldrush and sometimes as far as

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Atlin to have some fun. The usual amusements of the miner and prospector consisted of eating, drinking, gambling and dancing with the women—the “sporting ladies” as they were called.

In those days, wherever there was a camp, there some of these women would be. They were of every race and nationality, every religion and creed. I think at Goldrush there must have been twenty of them, each one living in her own little house with usually a coloured woman to cook and do the work. They dressed attractively and some of them were cultured, well-educated women. Most of them were quite pretty. Some could play and sing quite well, and those who could not employed professional entertainers to play and sing in order to entertain their guests. Drinks were always served at these houses at the customary price of one dollar a drink. This was the only opportunity the miners had of contact with womenkind, and many of them visited the women merely for the feminine company and for the music provided.

There were many mysteries connected with the origin of these women. Where had they come from? What had brought them to the North? What had been their previous life? Some of them would talk about these things and some of them would not. For the most part they seemed not to desire to have their private lives intruded upon. They had their own rules of conduct, which, according to their lights, were quite high. “Behave yourself like a gentleman,” was

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

an expression often heard in their houses, and for the most part this rule was strictly enforced.

In the North, the "sporting women" were not permitted by the miners to have male hangers-on, protectors, bullies or pimps. No girl was ever taken advantage of and so needed no protection.

It seemed to me that, on the whole, these women were innately honest and kind, despite their unconventional mode of life. Often they were nurses and good Samaritans to the miners. Some of them had a knowledge of first aid and kept supplies of bandages and other medical necessities. When a miner was injured, or fell sick, they would go to his camp and look after him, not expecting, and usually never receiving, any pay or compensation at all.

There was one case of this kind, I remember, the first winter I was there. A prospector had come down with a bad illness in a cabin some fifty miles away from the camp. He was too ill to be brought in, so one of the women closed up her house, hired a dog team and driver, and went out to take care of the sick man. She stayed with him for four months and nursed him back to health. When the man was better again she returned to the camp, opened up her house, and continued her life the way it had been before. While she had been away, of course, she had lost a substantial part of her income, but she never complained.

I never heard any man say an ill word against one of these "sporting women" with but one exception.



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

This was a woman who had come up from Mexico City and who was called "The Greaser".

The Greaser had evidently never been in a northern mining camp before and she started at once playing smart tricks on the men—tricks that were not in accordance with the general conduct of her "profession" as practised in that part of the world. The miners stood it for a while; then they determined to pay her back.

Charlie Straker and a few others visited her house one night. They ordered the best the place provided, including champagne, and spent their money freely until it was time to go.

"Why don't we stay here for a couple of days," Charlie suggested, pretending to be drunk.

The others shook their heads. "Our dust is all gone," they complained.

"Well," said Charlie slyly, "I'll shoot the big nugget then," and he pulled out from his pocket a nugget as big as an egg.

The woman's avaricious eyes began to sparkle when she saw the nugget and she immediately closed the door.

"Sure," she said wheedlingly, "you boys can stay here for a few days. Just give me the nugget and the whole house is yours."

"But," protested Charlie, "we don't know what the nugget's worth."

The woman looked at the nugget. "I'll take a chance on it," she said. The nugget was handed over and the woman quickly hid it from sight.

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

The boys stayed three days at her house, drank up all her liquor, ate up all her food, and then went back to the creek.

Soon there came a great outcry from Goldrush. The woman had discovered that the nugget was made of brass and was worth nothing at all! She was the object of so much ridicule, however, that she finally packed up and left the camp, which was just what everyone had hoped she would do. We never heard of her again.

There was one very mysterious woman, dark-featured and with an incipient moustache, who came up to our camp accompanied by a huge, vicious-looking wolfhound. She said she had plenty of money and wanted to buy a claim. Finally she bought a partnership with one Pat Mahoney, and in about a month the news spread around that she and Pat intended to get married. The Gold Commissioner came to perform the ceremony and the miners gave the newly-wed couple a party that was both loud and prolonged.

In the middle of the night following the wedding, however, the bridegroom jumped out of bed, rushed outside, threw himself into the creek and was drowned! The woman then owned the mine. She hired some men to work it for her and for a time lived in fine style.

At the end of three months she joined up with another Irishman, who owned a nearby claim. Much to our surprise, we heard she was going to be married again. The Gold Commissioner once more performed the ceremony, but he looked rather grim about it, I

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

thought. We could not find it in our hearts to give the couple any party this time, remembering what had occurred on the previous bridal night.

Again, in the middle of the night following the wedding, the new bridegroom ran out, shot the woman's dog, and then shot himself!

What was behind these two tragedies? No one ever found out. It was, however, too much for the miners. We all met together, went in a body to the woman's house, and told her that it would be better for her health if she left within twenty-four hours. We provided her with a dog team, and sufficient gold for her to get down to Seattle with and a little over to spare. She departed and we never saw nor heard of her again.

(This story, it will be noticed, is a somewhat startling parallel to that told in the Book of Tobit, in the Apocrypha, in which Sara, the daughter of Raguel, is mentioned as having been given in marriage by her father to no less than *seven* different men, each one of whom died on the wedding night! Tobit finally exorcised the jealous evil spirit that possessed Sara, married her, and all was well. Whether the Klondike woman was possessed of an evil spirit or not, I do not know, but at all events her great dog was evil-looking enough to have been a materialized evil spirit itself!)

\* \* \* \*

During the months of June and July it was quite light all night long. For a week or so the sun did not

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

disappear from sight at all. One could easily read a newspaper at midnight.

This gave us long evenings in which to amuse ourselves, and since there were some very good musicians on the creek, musical evenings were a common occurrence. Mouth organs and violins contributed to many a happy party, and there was, I remember, one splendid performer on the guitar. Usually quite a fair amount of liquor was consumed during these gatherings and whiskey and rum were the most popular drinks. Charlie Straker, however, stuck to brandy. He drank it, he said, because he had a weak heart, and from the quantity he drank his heart must have been very weak indeed. On the other hand, it must have been very strong to have stood it!

Every week-end there would be sports gatherings, at which we would indulge in boxing, wrestling, running, and shooting with .22 rifles. We rigged up a very ingenious way of marking hits without going to the trouble of using regular targets. On a log, some distance away, would be placed a couple of inches of a stick of dynamite. There was no question when a hit was made, for the detonation could be heard a mile off.

The sport that found most favour, however, was drilling a hole in a rock with a steel drill and a hammer. Two men would take part in this at one time, and then the number of inches would be counted that had been drilled in a certain period of time. We also had com-

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

petitions in tree felling, both with saws and with axes, and in sawing trees into logs.

Snow-shoeing and skiing were not considered sports at all, because we had to do so much of these things in our everyday hard life. The same was true of sleigh-racing with dogs. It was not encouraged, for it was thought that the dogs had enough to do in their ordinary daily routine.

The dogs used in the Klondike were of almost every breed under the sun. The favourite breed was a cross between a Scotch collie and a huskie. A pure-bred collie was invariably used for a leader. The dogs were hitched up six or eight together, tandem fashion. The odd miner would hitch his dogs in pairs, but this was not seen very often, for the trails as a rule were not very wide.

In winter-time, as I have already indicated, the weather became exceedingly cold. At times the mercury thermometers would freeze up, and only the spirit thermometers would register at all. I have seen kerosene freeze, and I was in the North when the official temperature was said to register eighty-two below!

It was the rule on the creeks that when it was below sixty, no one ventured outside. The risk of freezing exposed parts of the body was too great. Frozen ears, noses and chins were common, however, and the curious thing was that the person who was suffering the freezing rarely knew of it till it was pointed out to him by someone else. The frozen part would turn

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

dead white and there would be no feeling in it. The best cure was to rub the part with snow until circulation was restored. The victim must never go near a warm stove.

Almost every winter one heard of men being frozen to death. I once found a miner who had died this way. He looked quite peaceful, I thought. Freezing to death usually happened when a man was alone. Perhaps he would be walking back to his claim in very cold weather. He would get tired and sleepy from his exertions—or maybe from the effects of drinking—and would lie down in the snow for a rest. That was usually the end of him. For this reason it was the invariable custom in winter for people to travel in pairs. A man and his partner never left each other if it could be helped.

This being so much together—and sometimes never seeing anyone else for weeks and even months on end—resulted in all sorts of strange situations arising, sometimes even in tragedy. There were two well-educated Englishmen, for instance, living together on our creek who, it was said, maintained all the punctilious civilities of polite society in their manners towards each other but never spoke one word to each other for nine months! There was another man on an adjoining creek who shot and severely wounded his partner because he found him washing his feet in the bowl used for making bread!

Of course, we dressed appropriately for the cold weather and looked, it seemed to me, like Esquimaux.

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Two of everything was the general rule. Everyone wore red flannel California underwear, tied with tapes around the neck, wrists and ankles. Over two pairs of large woollen socks we wore what were called German socks, which were heavy stockings tied with tapes just below the knees. In the dead of winter, when the snow was deep and dry, we wore moccasins, made by the nearby Siwash Indians. For working in the mine we wore mutlucks, also made by the Indians out of water-proof walrus hide.

On top of two thick grey woollen shirts came a sheepskin-lined coat, or a double and sometimes treble-lined canvas coat. Over all this again, if one was travelling any distance, came a parka, one of the finest conceivable garments for the North. It consisted of a sort of cloak, stretching to the knees, with long sleeves fur-lined at the wrists and with a fur-lined hood. It covered one up entirely, leaving only the eyes and the tip of the nose visible. Fur gauntlets, attached to a piece of rawhide that hung around the neck, were worn on the hands, and these could be slipped off and on at will. In this kind of an outfit a man was ready for any weather that might occur.

Winter, of course, was the longest period of the year. Yet it was really the most enjoyable time of all. If there is anything more exhilarating than to travel over the white and glistening snow, with the temperature about zero and the air perfectly still, and with the sky above one like a great inverted blue-black bowl filled with glittering stars, that seem to hang so close

## DAILY LIFE IN THE NORTH

to the earth that one only has to reach up to grasp them, and with a huge round silvery moon shining brightly and the majestic Aurora Borealis making multi-coloured patterns of incessantly flickering light overhead, I have yet to experience it. It filled one with a sense of power and with a feeling of pure joy. One had a quiet conviction that the Almighty was hovering very near and that one was safe in His keeping.

In the North there was a peculiar silence, that seemed to dampen down any unnecessary talk. It reminded me, sometimes, of a great open-air monastery, in which all the monks were miners. The habit of silence grew on one up there. One began to think more deeply. It was quite a shock, when one went "outside" again, to be on streets and in hotels where one seemed to be engulfed immediately in a vast torrent of idle babble, chatter and noise.

One could never, however, take things too quietly or too easily in the North, for everyone was engaged, day by day, and even hour by hour, in a never-ending struggle with nature—a struggle with an antagonist that never "let up". The slightest laziness or lack of preparation—and one would be dead! It seemed to arouse in men an unconscious but keen and earnest desire to hold their own against nature, to try to keep alive and to achieve something. It made good men out of bad and finer men out of good. It was an experience that I, for one, would not have missed for anything in the world.



## CHAPTER TEN

### Klondike Characters

ONE met all sorts of queer people in the Klondike, some of whose lives would make a whole story in themselves alone.

There was Charlie Straker, for instance. Charlie was the son of an English bishop. One day, unfortunately, he was found in compromising circumstances with a housemaid in the Bishop's palace. He was at once given his patrimony—the equivalent of some twenty thousand dollars—and told to go to America, to buy a fruit ranch in California and never to return.

At the age of eighteen years, then, Charlie had journeyed out from England to California by way of New Orleans. It was racing week in New Orleans when he arrived there, and the young Charles was soon persuaded to invest all his money in the purchase of a horse that could not possibly fail to win in the big race.

By the end of the week, Charlie had gained a whole world of experience in racing, but had lost his twenty thousand dollars and was absolutely penniless.

He "rode the rods" underneath the train the greater part of the way from New Orleans to Los Angeles, and finally drifted into the Sacramento Valley, where he got a job as a cow hand on one of the big Miller and Lux cattle ranches. (In England, Charlie had ridden to hounds almost from the time he could walk, but he

#### KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

soon realized that riding bronchos on the great American plains was very different from riding well-trained horses over the hunting-fields at home.) He became proficient in time, however, and said he thoroughly enjoyed his ranching experience.

Pretty soon Charlie got into trouble, from drinking and fighting, and so was discharged. He took his horse and rode to San Francisco, and from thence up to Victoria, where, for a while, he held a job as assistant secretary in the American Consulate. Here, in this respected position, Charles behaved himself for some time, and even won an important tennis tournament, becoming well known in sporting circles.

But liquor and high spirits soon proved his undoing again and it ended in Charles being ignominiously discharged.

He then got a job at Nanaimo, mining coal, following that by one in Vancouver shovelling coal into tramp steamers.

One day he hired out to a general contractor. Almost the first thing the contractor said to him was:

"Take the large grass cutter and the big roller, and cut and roll the lawn where the tennis championships are to be played next week."

Charles did this, and on the very day when he, as a gentleman amateur, was to defend the title he had won the previous year, he was obliged to spend the morning rolling the grass. He was seen and recognized by one of the officials and it was decided that he had thereby lost his amateur standing—that he was no

longer a gentleman and so could not compete in the tournament.

Charlie then drifted to the west coast of Vancouver Island, where he had a most adventurous and somewhat notorious career. He lived for a time with a tribe of Siwash Indians, and even took a Siwash wife. During this time, too, he salvaged, alone, a large steamship, that had been deserted by its crew in a storm and had miraculously drifted into the natural harbour near which Charlie then lived. Instead of receiving a big grant of money for salvaging the vessel, however, Charles went to jail! While waiting for the tugboat to come and tow the steamer to Victoria, Charles broached the cargo of rum the steamer carried, and he and a number of Indians got drunk, and a stabbing affray occurred. Charles, of course, was blamed for it all and was severely punished.

He next drifted up to the Klondike, and finally to the Atlin district, where I met him and became his good friend.

\* \* \* \*

There was one most unusual character on our creek, an Irishman called "Wild-eyed Paddy", so named because of a peculiar stare in his eyes.

Paddy struck it rich one day. He had hit on what all miners were looking for—an old creek rich with gold.

Paddy immediately put twelve men to work and went off to Goldrush. There he hired twelve "sporting women" to come up to the creek—a woman for each

## KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

man. Then he sent down to Victoria for a car-load of champagne. Every man, as he came off shift, was greeted by a woman and handed a bottle of champagne. The women were well paid, of course, and so were the men, and Paddy did not mind very much if some of them put in their own pockets a few of the nuggets they found.

All in all, Paddy made a fabulous amount of money. He then decided to go "outside". He reached Seattle safely and after that was not heard of for several years. One day I was told that the poor old man had been found working as a janitor in a third-rate Seattle hotel, having lost, by treating all and sundry, the fortune he had made.

\* \* \* \*

Another famous character, with whom I became good friends, was an old Yorkshireman by the name of Con Dell. Con was about six feet six inches tall and was usually as fat as butter in the spring when he set off for the mountains on a prospecting trip. He would come back just before the snow began to fly looking thin and gaunt and half-starved. He would talk of great findings, but always, we noticed, he would go off in a different direction the next year.

When he returned from these prospecting trips, Con would set himself up in a small cabin and get one of the miners who had done well during the summer to "grubstake" him through the winter. It usually took Con about six weeks to get fattened up. He

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

seemed to swell visibly as he filled himself full of good food. When he had regained his former rotundity, he would offer his services for a job.

We loved to have Con Dell call on us, for he was good company. I can see him yet, sitting on the edge of a bunk, "smoking matches" by the hour. Some declared that he filled his pipe with tobacco once at the beginning of winter and never had occasion to fill it again. He would start a long yarn and, with a sweeping motion under his trouser leg, strike a match. He would hold the match to his pipe, take a puff or two, and then go on talking again. Soon the match would burn his fingers and he would throw it away. Then he would strike another match and repeat the same performance.

This would go on for the best part of a night. Con spent a fortune in matches, but, oh, the yarns about prospecting that he could tell! He had roamed all over the north for more than thirty years, and had found many a good creek, but had never had the patience to stay and work out any of them. His pleasure was in *finding* gold, not in mining it. Let others, he would say, waste their lives digging in the earth. His was the joy of the true prospector—the *strike*!

\* \* \* \*

There was a queer old Welshman who cut his throat because he learned that his wife in Seattle had run off with another man.

I was called on about two o'clock in the morning to

## KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

go to the old man's help. He was in a bad way when I arrived, but still alive. He had a gaping wound in his throat, stretching from ear to ear, and he was bleeding profusely. While I held the torn pieces of flesh together with my fingers, another miner wound a towel tightly about his neck in an effort to staunch the flow of blood.

Towards morning my partner, Pete, arrived back from Goldrush with a well-known gambler who, it was rumoured, had been a doctor before he had come up north. With them they also brought Phyllis, a negro "sporting woman" who had been found to be the owner of a medicine chest, left with her in payment by a sea captain who had visited her some years before. The gambler cleaned up the wound, sewed it up with thread, bandaged the man's throat competently and pronounced that he would live.

Phyllis, the young negress, immediately constituted herself nurse. (She remained with the injured man, waiting on him hand and foot, until he was completely recovered.) She suggested, however, that someone should help her watch the patient, since people who had attempted to commit suicide once were likely to do it again and the man should therefore not be left day or night.

Several miners on the creek promised to do watch and watch beside the sick miner all through the twenty-four hours. He liked to be read to, so books were collected with which to amuse him.

One day it was my turn to do the watch. I picked up a book called *The Son of the Wolf*. It was a collec-

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

tion of northern stories written by a man named Jack London. It was the first time I had ever heard of that author and I little knew then that one day I would know him and count him as one of my best and most intimate friends.

The sick man claimed that he knew Jack London well.

"I met him on Stuart Creek, in the winter of '97," he said. "By damn, he was a great arguifier. He could beat any man down."

He went on to tell how Jack London had been obliged, after a short time, to give up mining work and go back "outside" again. "It wasn't for lack of guts, though," the sick man championed. "His wrists were too small for the hard work. He was a fine chap and would have made any miner a good partner. You could depend on him. Well, I never thought he'd write a book!"

As I read the collection of stories, the sick man's interest awakened more and more. He recognized many of the characters and called them by their real names. And presently, at the mention of one particular character, he grinned broadly and said:

"I bet he means that one for me!"

He was extremely proud that Jack London had put him into a book and from that time he began to cheer up and to recover. As far as I know he never repeated the attempt on his own life again.

\* \* \* \*

The most extraordinary character of all that I met

## KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

in the Klondike was a man called "Pompey Cæsar".

All sorts of stories were told about this man in the North. He was called "The Mad Englishman", and it was said of him that he had obtained the highest possible honours at Cambridge in mathematics and had gone crazy from attempting to devise a "system" for beating roulette. (I found out later that both of these things were true, or partly true at all events.)

It was also said that he had been in partnership with a certain prospector and that between them they had discovered a small creek in a secluded spot and had "struck it" very rich indeed. One day his partner had accidentally shot himself fatally in the head. The two men were far from the nearest habitation. For fear of being accused of murdering his partner for his share of the gold they had found, Pompey Cæsar loaded the corpse on a sleigh and dragged it by hand—they had no dogs with them at the time—over one hundred miles across mountainous country to the nearest settlement.

At the settlement Pompey Cæsar demanded that a North West Mounted Policeman should come and hear the whole story. Pompey Cæsar was completely exonerated, but the belief still persisted in the minds of some that he really had killed his partner. The rumours, after a while, had so preyed on Pompey Cæsar's mind that he had gone away by himself to some secret creek, where he dug enough gold during the summer to keep him for the balance of the year. He was an inveterate gambler, it was said, and played a great deal. Sometimes he did well, in which case he would not visit his



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

claim that year; sometimes, however, he would be quite "cleaned out" and then he would go off to his secret place, do some more work, and return later with another good "poke" of gold.

This man had earned his name of "Pompey Cæsar" in a most interesting way. One winter, when he was penniless, he had taken the job of "mushing the mail" from Atlin to the head of the White Pass. He had bought a dog team and had named each one of the dogs after some great Roman. There were Pompey, Cæsar, Antony, Augustus, Gracchi the first and Gracchi the second, and a bitch he called Cleopatra. Far and wide his voice could be heard calling the leaders: "Mush, Pompey! Mush, Cæsar!"

The way I myself first met him was really very curious. Pete and I were on a hunting trip in winter. Our supplies had run short and so my partner had gone back to camp for more. He would be away for about a week and as far as I knew there was not another living human being within a radius of at least one hundred and fifty miles.

Our tent was pitched just on the edge of the timber line. One day, looking across the valley to the opposite mountain, I saw some mountain sheep on the slopes. I took my rifle and made my way along the mountain side, seeking a good path down which to descend into the valley to reach the opposite slope.

Suddenly, from across the valley, I heard a voice. It was a cultivated English voice, and the clear, cold

## KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

mountain air carried to me distinctly the words it was intoning:

" 'Tis but a tent where takes his one day's rest,  
A sultan to the realm of death addressed."

I was astonished to hear these words of the poet Omar Khayyam coming from some unseen person in this isolated spot. I had always been very fond of Omar Khayyam myself, and knew the Fitzgerald translation by heart. Something impelled me to sing out the succeeding lines:

"The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash  
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest."

There was a moment's silence. Then the voice called out:

"Hallo, hallo! Who are you?"

"I'm Harry Strange," I shouted back. "Who are you?"

"I'm Pompey Cæsar," the voice replied. "Have you a camp over there?"

"Yes," I answered back.

"Stay where you are," the voice ordered. "I'm coming over."

In about half an hour's time a most astonishing-looking individual appeared before me. He was tall, lean and gaunt, and had a long, aquiline nose and soft, gentle blue eyes. A nicely-trimmed Vandyke beard, coming to a point, fell at least a foot below his chin. He looked somewhat like the pictures of our Saviour that one sees in religious books.

In that cold weather—it was more than thirty be-

low—he pulled off his mitt and held out a thin, artistic-looking hand. I remember that I blushed afterwards when I realized that I had not been so polite, for I grasped his hand without removing my own mitt.

"I've heard about you," I said. "Of course, Pompey Cæsar isn't your real name. Would you tell me what it is?"

He smiled. "The Postmaster knows it," he replied, "but no one else. I think Pompey Cæsar is a good enough name for me, don't you?"

"Well, two of the greatest men in the world owned it between them," I said. I could see that he did not intend to divulge his real identity.

"Ah!" he remarked, "so you've construed some Latin, have you?"

I told him that my masters at school had insisted on my trying to learn a little Latin and Greek.

We went into the tent and began to chat. I can still recall some of the things he told me that night. He spoke of life as he had found it in many parts of the world.

"And do you intend to continue this kind of life?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, solemnly. "I shall continue it until I die. You see, I love the North. The North is clear, clean, pure. It is straight and fair. A man should try to be that way, too. The North is *white* and we should *think white* and *act white* also."

At last, after we had been talking for some hours, he said:

## KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

"I like you, Harry Strange. Would you care to join me as a partner? We could have a lot of fun together, I believe. You'd never be in want, I can assure you of that."

"I'd like to do it," I said, "but I'd have to bring my partner, Pete, along. Pete has taught me all I know about mining and prospecting. I couldn't possibly let him down, you know."

"Of course you couldn't," Pompey Cæsar answered gravely. But he shook his head. "I wouldn't want your partner. Two's enough at any time. I'd be taking a chance on you, Harry, but the odds would be stacked clean against me if a third man came along. Well, I quite understand your attitude, and I hope you'll strike it rich one day. Don't forget, though, if ever you get into trouble, or need money badly, come to me and get it. You can always depend on me for a grubstake."

Before we turned in for sleep, he gave me a copy of a book. It was entitled *Typee*.

"It's interesting," he said. "I've trod every foot of the valleys *Typee* describes."

(I read the book later and it fired me with such a longing to visit the South Seas that when the opportunity finally presented itself, I did not hesitate, and so my life took another strange turn because I had read a new book.)

The next morning, when I awoke, Pompey Cæsar had gone. I went outside and suddenly I heard his voice, quite far off, again intoning Omar Khayyam.

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

And once again I answered, and we went on intoning alternately across the mountain tops, verse for verse, until in the distance his voice died away.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Court Comes up North

THERE was very little crime in the North, but the Court, as a matter of form, made a regular annual appearance to try any cases that might have come up. The Court consisted of a judge and two lawyers who, it was said, used to toss up to see which one would defend and which one would prosecute in any particular case.

One winter, my old friend Con Dell was hauled up before the Court. He had gone off in the fall to the end of an adjoining creek and had staked a bench claim there all by himself. He had driven in a tunnel but did not get very far. He spent most of his time, as usual, visiting his friends and working for others in order to get enough money to buy food.

One day some new-comers came up and staked a claim alongside Con Dell's. Suddenly there was a great to-do. The strangers insisted that Con Dell had staked nearer to five hundred feet instead of the two hundred and fifty which the law allowed. Being new-comers, and not properly understanding the spirit of mining and prospecting as yet, they entered a formal complaint with the Gold Commissioner against Con Dell, and the Gold Commissioner, who was a personal friend of Con's, had no option but to arrest him.

On the day of the trial, Con Dell refused to talk to

the attorneys. "I don't deal with no understrappers," he said testily. "I'll talk straight to the Judge himself."

The lawyer appointed to defend Con was a small puny-looking man. Con took one look at him and said: "Get out of my way, you, or I'll spit on your leg and break it!"

These courts were somewhat informal, so the Judge said to Con:

"The surveyor's evidence shows that you have staked out over five hundred feet instead of two hundred and fifty. How do you account for that, Con Dell?"

"Well, your Honour," Con replied, "it was all done unknowinglike. You see, I've been a measuring of claims for the last thirty years, and we prospectors, who open up the country to the miners, would never get anywhere if we had to carry a lot of measuring instruments around with us all the time. So we depend on a pace. Eighty-four paces makes two hundred and fifty feet, I've always been told. Well, your Honour, when I went out to pace that time, I had a touch of the rheumatiz, and so I went along with a kind of hop-perty-lurk, and I guess that each pace must have been a kind of long one, and so that's how it all occurred."

The Judge laughed and dismissed the case. That night we all had a poker game together, and Con Dell made a grubstake for himself for the next summer by winning most of the money that the Judge and the lawyers had brought along with them.

The next winter, alas, Con Dell was arrested again—this time on a more serious charge. He had been

## THE COURT COMES UP NORTH

found by a roving North West Mounted Policeman selling liquor, or "hootch" as it was called, to the Siwash Indians. (This "hootch" was made up of a very small amount of whiskey combined with the liquor from soaked plugs of tobacco and—some were malicious enough to suggest—with a little sulphuric acid added to give it a special kick!)

The North West Mounted Policeman had found Con's gallon jug partly filled with pure whiskey, together with the raw materials for making "hootch".

The case looked black against Con and we all felt that this time he had very little chance of getting off. The attorney for the defence, however, insisted on asking an interminable string of questions of the North West Mounted Policeman, and at last, as dusk was drawing on, the Judge decided that Court should be adjourned till the next day.

This was a jury trial. That night there were the usual poker games, in which many, including the prisoner, joined in. Someone had put up free drinks and a hilarious time was enjoyed by all present.

The next day the Court reassembled, and Con Dell's attorney started by saying that the case had now got to the stage where he would like to see some evidence produced. Up to now there had been no evidence, he said, as to whether the crock actually contained whiskey. All they had was the *word* of the policeman, and a policeman was not supposed to be an expert on liquor, was he? How was anyone to know that it was not cold tea, or even sarsaparilla that the crock contained?



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The Judge ordered a simple test. He said he would taste the evidence himself.

The crock was brought in. Lo and behold, it was empty! The Judge and the jury, and the prisoner himself, during the poker game of the night before, had consumed the whole lot! Since there was no evidence, Con Dell got off again.

\* \* \* \*

On one occasion I had an amusing encounter with the Court myself.

My partner Pete and I had determined to try our luck at prospecting, and so we had gone off on a trip one summer and had established headquarters about fifty miles from Spruce Creek. There was less game around than we had expected, and apparently no fish in the streams, and so we soon began to run out of food. Pete took the two pack dogs we had brought with us and went back to Goldrush for further supplies.

The day after Pete left, an Indian woman, weak from long travelling, arrived at our camp, and by means of signs conveyed to me the fact that her husband had recently been killed by a falling tree and that she was about to bear a child.

We had but one tent, so I put her on my bed, and in about two hours her baby was born. It was a rather frightening experience for a young man, who knew nothing about such things. However, the woman directed me how to help her, and when it was all over

## THE COURT COMES UP NORTH

I knew more about life and its beginnings than I had ever done before.

In three days, revived by some good meals of hot stew and strong coffee, the woman was ready to travel again. She took her baby, a fine little boy, and went on her way. She seemed to know quite well where she was heading for. I never saw her again.

Everything had gone off all right with the baby's birth, but my two blankets, which were the only ones I had, were quite spoiled. At least, I thought so until Pete returned.

"Spoiled, hell!" Pete said. "Just wash them out and they'll be as good again as ever."

Naturally Pete was astonished to hear of my experience, and I had to stand a deal of "joshing" from the boys, on my return to the creek, about my so-called "Indian wife and child".

To keep business in front of the Court the next time it came up to our district, it was suggested to me that I should make out a case and sue the Dominion Government for a pair of new blankets. (Indians were wards of the Dominion of Canada and consequently the Government was responsible for them and for their actions.) This I did.

Knowing the case was on, the miners and the "sporting women" turned out in full force and filled the Courtroom to overflowing. The lawyers and the Judge asked me pertinent and embarrassing questions and everyone had a good deal of fun at my expense. How-

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

ever, I was awarded two new blankets, although I never did receive them.

\* \* \* \*

Coming from Manchester and London, where thieves abounded, and where a number of policemen were employed at all times to keep order and peace, I was astonished to find that the miners in the North did not take any precautions to safeguard their money or their property. Shack doors were never locked; indeed, I never once saw a lock on the door of any building. It was the habit with miners to put their gold in a "poke"—a container made of pliable leather and in shape resembling a small sock—and to lay the "poke" under their pillows at night or put it in a box on a shelf near the lamp, where it would be, of course, easy for anyone to take it if he wished to do so. Outside the mines, the sluice boxes, sometimes with thousands of dollars worth of gold in plain sight at "clean-up" time, would be left unguarded, but I never heard of any gold being stolen.

There were, however, one or two instances of what might be termed "smart dealing", and there was the odd shooting affray, usually concerned with miners who had come over from the "American side". These matters, as a rule, were dealt with by the miners themselves.

One instance of smart dealing was in the case of an old Russian miner, who had come from Siberia. He had fallen ill and wanted to go back to Russia. He had no

## THE COURT COMES UP NORTH

money, however, and so he bethought himself of a trick in order to obtain some.

He was working a claim in a hill that had returned very poor "pay". Suddenly the word got around that the Russian had "struck it rich". The evidence was that he was turning in to the Gold Commissioner's Office large sums each week as royalty, royalty being a percentage which every miner was supposed to pay to the Government on the gold he took out.

The news reached some people in Atlin, who had recently arrived. They went to see the old Russian and began to dicker with him for his claim. No, he told them, he didn't care to sell it. It wasn't a good claim. He continued, however, to pay high royalties when he went to Atlin every week.

Naturally, the more the old man resisted their offers, the keener the prospective purchasers became. They kept raising their bid until finally and apparently with reluctance the old man gave in. He made the purchasers sign a paper, however, stating that they bought the claim without any guarantee. They gave the Russian fifteen thousand dollars in cash for it. Away the old fellow went.

The people who had purchased the claim opened up the mine in a big way. They hired a dozen men and set to work.

It was soon discovered that the mine was worthless—just as the old man had said. It dawned on the new owners then that they had been duped. However, there

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

was nothing they could do about it, so they had to treat it all as a highly expensive joke!

\* \* \* \*

One shooting affray that occurred while I was in the North was far from pleasant. I saw it with my own eyes.

Several of us were gathered around the bar in the Goldrush Hotel one night. We were singing and enjoying ourselves when a stranger walked in. He carried a gun in his belt along his right hip. (In the British territory where we were living, nobody carried guns. The only people one saw with revolvers strapped to their sides were the American miners, who sometimes came over from Alaska, generally called the "American side".)

The stranger elbowed his way roughly to the bar. Not being used to such behaviour, one of the miners pushed him away.

The stranger immediately drew his gun and shot off the lobe of the miner's ear.

The gun had no sooner gone off than another shot rang out. It came from behind the bar, hit the stranger and killed him instantly. As there were three barmen standing behind the bar, one of them, of course, did it. No one tried to find out which one had done the shooting. It was felt that proper justice had been wrought.

The dead man was picked up and carried outside. A grave was dug in a nearby hill, and he was dumped into it. Before being buried, his pockets were searched.

#### THE COURT COMES UP NORTH

All that was found on him were a few hundred dollars in gold dust, and two packs of marked cards, still sealed in the manufacturer's original and apparently unbroken wrapper!

The money was put into the revolving charity fund that had been instituted some years before. No one knew where the dead man had come from and no one tried to find out. The occurrence was never mentioned again.

This revolving fund, by the way, was an interesting thing. It had been started by a prospector who had received some assistance from a fellow-miner whom, when he came to repay the loan, the prospector could not trace. The money was given to a saloon keeper, to be kept by him until some other case of necessity arose.

The sum had grown from five hundred dollars to several thousand, for each one who borrowed from it repaid it with interest when he could. It had been used at various times to aid sick and destitute miners, and to send them "Outside" to hospitals in Vancouver and Seattle when they needed special attention, and also to bring miners back to the North when they had "gone broke" in the cities. It was said that the fund had never been taken advantage of; no one signed anything, and no record was kept; yet the amount grew steadily larger year by year.

\* \* \* \*

The last summer I was in the North, a disagreeable incident occurred. Some Alaskan miners had come in

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

and were making themselves most objectionable. They had started to work the creek higher up from our claim, and when summer came, in order to work the bedrock of their claim, they diverted the greater part of the creek water from our creek into an old channel leading off in a different direction, thus leaving insufficient water for the miners lower down.

This was a serious situation. We therefore formed a Committee and waited on these people, explaining to them courteously the law of the creek—which was that no man must waste water and that each must let the water, that he himself used for sluicing, go back into the creek again so that it would be available for others further down.

The men only laughed, however, and said that they had a couple of shot-guns and some grape shot waiting for anyone who interfered with them.

Following this, the miners sent the Committee, of which I was made Chairman, to Atlin to interview the Gold Commissioner concerning the affair. The Commissioner appointed the Committee as his deputy and named it the Spruce Creek Miners' Adjustment Committee, giving it full power to act in his place.

There were eight of us on this Committee, and I felt very proud of being elected to the important position of Chairman. As an officer of the law I borrowed a rifle, and the other men picked up their .22's, and some sticks of dynamite, fixing a detonator cap in each stick with a few inches of fuse; then off we marched to interview the offenders again.

#### THE COURT COMES UP NORTH

We told them that we now had the authority of the law behind us and ordered them to remove the dam they had built without further delay. They refused to do so. Some of us then covered them with rifles, while others of the Committee went to the dam, put in the dynamite, and blew the whole thing up. We then disarmed the new-comers, taking from them their shot-guns and revolvers, and warning them that we would deal with them summarily and harshly if they ever made trouble again.

Seeing that we meant business, they straightway apologized and said that they had not realized how serious was their offence. They promised in future to abide by the law of the creek.

After this they worked their claim in the regular way and became quite good citizens of the North.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### I go "Outside" Again

THAT third and last summer I was in the North, I entered into a new partnership. This was with Charlie Straker, Billy Alliot, Pete Destrey and a young new-comer, an English lad named Broley, who was only nineteen years of age.

We staked a claim on a bench in an area that was known to be wet. It consisted of slimy-looking, moist creek gravel, with water oozing out of it here and there—very different stuff from the hard, stiff, self-supporting conglomerate cemented gravel on the opposite side of the creek, where Pete and I had mined before. The new claim was thought to be rich.

The tunnel into the hill had to be painstakingly timbered and lagged every foot of the way, which was the reason the claim had never before been staked.

Sets of pine posts, about six inches in diameter, were erected and placed some five feet—the width of the tunnel—apart. Across the top of each set of two posts was placed a cap made from a spruce log, eight inches in diameter, and having a flat part hewn at each end. Into these flat parts the upright posts were fitted, and so the posts were held firmly apart and could not squeeze together at the top. Split poles would then be placed, one on top of the other, between the sets of

I GO "OUTSIDE" AGAIN

timbers, from the floor up the sides and then across the top. One literally walked in a tunnel of wood.

Only the floor was left bare and untimbered. A small ditch was dug in the bottom, down which a constant stream of water flowed out of the mine.

My final decision to leave the creek was prompted mainly by a chat I had one day with an old miner, with whom I had recently become acquainted. The first time I visited the old fellow, I was surprised to find him reading Homer's *Odyssey* in the original Greek. He was, in fact, striding up and down in his lonely cabin, chanting the poetry aloud. (In this he reminded me of Pompey Cæsar.)

I told him of my schooldays, and of the hours I had spent trying to construe the Latin and Greek poets. He was delighted to hear of it and we spent many evenings after that during which he helped me to read the classics in their original tongues. He was certainly a fine scholar and was said to have once been a schoolmaster in a well-known old English public school. He had, however, it was rumoured, been obliged to leave England on account of a nasty scandal, concerning himself and some of the boys. Whatever the real reason was, the fact remained that he had come up north, changed his name, and cut himself off from the world. He told me that his only touch now with civilization was a close companionship with the great minds of the past.

One day this old fellow said to me:

"There's something I want to talk to you about,

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Harry Strange." He paused for a moment, looked me over critically, and then went on: "You know Con Dell, don't you? You've met Dan Reilly? And you've seen Mike Callaghan?"

"Yes," I replied, wondering what he had to say.

"Well," he continued, "keeping them in your mind's eye, take a good look at me. You don't want to look like me and those others when you get to be sixty or seventy, do you? Come on, now, don't be afraid to tell me the truth!"

"No, I don't," I answered frankly.

"Then let me give you a tip," he said. "You've had too good an education and too good a training to ruin yourself up here. If you stay in the North, you'll gradually become just like us. Get out now and stay out. That's my advice to you."

Suddenly it dawned on me that the old miner spoke the truth. Con Dell and Dan Reilly and Mike Callaghan and the old scholar himself truly represented what happened to people who stayed in the North too long. If they did not "strike it rich", they became lazy and, as it was called, "bushed"; if they did find gold, it was sometimes even worse, for when they went "Outside" they usually became easy prey for every "shark" and "racketeer" who could camp on their trail.

"I'll do what you say," I said. "I'll leave at once."

\* \* \* \*

I had about two thousand dollars, so I determined to spend the following winter having a good rest. The

## I GO "OUTSIDE" AGAIN

boys could go on working the claim; I would just take my share after paying for a man to take my place.

I felt sad saying goodbye to my partners, for we had had some very happy times together. Alas, one of them I was never to meet again, for a grave tragedy happened shortly after I left.

The mine which we were working I had christened the "Manzi" Mine—a very good name for it, for Manzi in Kaffir means water, and the tragedy that occurred was caused through water.

One day the boys saw an unusual number of gold colours in the face of the drift. It looked as though they might have "struck it rich" at last.

After supper, three of them—Billy Alllott, the English lad Broley, and the new man who had taken my place—went back into the mine and began prodding in the face with the sharp end of their steel candlesticks. "Gophering" this is called.

The "pay streak" seemed to lead down to the floor of the tunnel, and Billy, in his excitement, picked up a crowbar, and began prodding away on the floor near the bottom of one of the posts. So eager was he in digging after the gold streak that he did not notice that he was undermining the post. Suddenly the post slipped inwards, and the whole set of timbers, with the lagging, collapsed and fell down.

The heavy spruce cap fell across Broley's thigh and broke it, at the same time pinning him down. Then the roof started to cave in and the sets of timbers going back to the mouth began to give way one after another.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The rumblings of the falling dirt, and the crashing of the falling timbers, became louder and louder. This was more than the new man could stand, and he rushed out of the mine and disappeared. Broley urged Billy to leave, too, but Billy, obeying an unwritten law of the North—that a man must never leave a partner in trouble—refused to do so. Billy yelled to the new man to go and get help, but the man, of course, was far away by this time and quite out of hearing.

Billy then set to work with a crowbar to try to lift the heavy post from Broley's broken leg. He could not raise it high enough to free Broley. Soon Broley lost consciousness.

At any time, for several hours following the accident, Billy could easily have got out safely himself. Or, if the new man had stayed and helped, they would probably have all succeeded in getting out alive.

It so happened that presently two miners from an adjoining claim walked by the mouth of the drift. They heard the rumbling of the falling roof, and went on to the shack to tell the boys that their mine was caving in. To their consternation they found evidence that the lads had returned to the mine.

The two miners immediately rushed back to the drift, lighted their candles and groped their way carefully into the tunnel. Soon they came to where the fallen timbers blocked the way. They began to shout: "Hello! Hello! Is anyone there?" And at once Billy answered them and told them what had occurred.

Billy was about sixty feet further in, the miners

I GO 'OUTSIDE' AGAIN

estimated, from where they were now standing. The sets of fallen timbers had not yet completely blocked the way. There was a small opening left. It was not big enough, however, for either of the two men—who both happened to be heavily built—to get through, but Billy, they thought, could have managed it, and they suggested that he try and wiggle through.

Broley, by this time, had regained consciousness, and now he called out:

"Please go, Billy. I'm done for. You can't help me. My thigh's broken and there are rocks on my chest. Get out now, while you can."

But Billy answered quietly: "Nothing doing, kid. We'll live together or we'll die together."

Then Billy asked the men outside if they would make a long plank with boards nailed together and tie on to it a few things—candles, matches, an axe, a bottle of water, a pencil and some paper.

The miners ran back to the shack, tore up the floor boards, hastily nailed them together end on end, and thus made a plank some sixty feet in length. Then they tied on to one end of this long plank the things that Billy had asked for. They pushed the plank through the hole left between the fallen timbers up to the trapped men. Billy lighted a candle and the men outside could hear him working with the axe, trying to free Broley.

All this time the mine was sluffing and sluffing, and soon the hole through the timbers closed down so tight that not even a dog could have squeezed through. Then

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Billy wrote a letter for Broley to his mother, tied it to the board, and the miners pulled it out.

It was twenty-four hours before the mine finally collapsed, and during all that time a whole gang of men, who had come to the rescue, were working frantically to reach Billy and Broley and to get them out.

Some time before the final crash came, Billy asked for a song. Two miners stood in the tunnel near the small opening in the timbers and sang some of the songs that miners love. They went on singing for a long time. All at once there came a terrific crash inside and after that silence. They had to make a quick dive for the mouth of the tunnel in order to save themselves. They just reached the outside of the mine when the face of the cliff caved entirely in.

The next day, operations were started to retrieve the bodies. A new tunnel was driven in from the creek bank and a shaft was started down from the top. But the ground was so wet, and kept sluffing so badly, that it was four months before the two men could be reached and taken out. The little chamber in which they were found was air-tight, and they looked, so Alex Alliott told me, just as though it had all happened the night before. Billy was sitting with Broley's head against his shoulder. His right hand was across Broley's forehead, as though he had been stroking away Broley's pain. They both looked very peaceful and Billy wore his usual half-quizzical smile.

To this day they lie side by side in Atlin cemetery. Of such "stuff" are the men of the North.

I GO "OUTSIDE" AGAIN

\* \* \* \*

I travelled "Outside" on the White Pass Railroad, a fine, scenic line. Its tracks cling to the sides of the high mountains, making one marvel at the ingenuity of the builders.

My gold was in a "poke" and the "poke" in a Gladstone bag of English pigskin that a relative had given me when I had left England to go to Canada.

In Skagway everything was still "wide open". The saloons, the gambling dens and the dance halls were all going full blast. Every effort was made by "runners" from these places to entice miners to stay for a day or two and to enjoy the pleasures of the town. Any miner who succumbed to these enticements usually lost all he had.

A group of us took a boat for Seattle the next day. We were a jolly crowd of about one hundred miners, with a few merchants among us and others in different walks of life.

When we boarded the boat, the purser said to us:

"Hang on tight to your gold pokes, boys."

I decided to take my "poke" out of my Gladstone bag and tie it to a belt round my waist under my clothes.

The first three nights on board, no one went to bed. The whole time was spent drinking, singing and skylarking, and having a general good time. Some of the songs and recitations given, although thoroughly enjoyed by that particular audience at that time, would scarcely bear repeating in polite company today!



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

When we made our first stop, a pretty half-breed Indian girl, of about eighteen years of age, came aboard. She immediately started "making eyes" at all the miners and some of them "fell for her" very hard indeed.

One night she played an amusing practical joke. She made an appointment with one of the miners to meet her at the stern on the top deck at exactly half-past twelve. This was a time when all the miners would be gathered, drinking and singing, in the lower saloon, she said.

When twelve-thirty came, the young miner who had made the engagement quietly slipped away from the crowd and made his way to the end of the ship. To his consternation he found a number of other men there, all walking up and down and obviously trying to avoid each other.

Suddenly a high, falsetto voice inquired:

"Anyone here looking for a lady? I've arrived, you see."

It was the purser, dressed in a woman's gown and wearing a black wig!

The disappointed would-be lovers had to laugh. The little Indian lass, it appeared, had made the same appointment with some twenty or thirty men, and had then persuaded the purser to keep it for her. The purser was carried shoulder-high to the bar and made to stand drinks all round. In the end, the joke was on him!

The boat arrived at Seattle at two in the morning. The night before the purser suggested to us that no one should go ashore until daylight.

## I GO "OUTSIDE" AGAIN

I lay in my bunk with all my clothes on, waiting for the dawn. Towards morning, however, I fell asleep. At the first streak of daylight, about seven o'clock, I was suddenly awakened by a slight noise. No one was in my cabin, but my bag, that had been under my bunk, had been pulled out to the middle of the floor and was slit wide open along one side. Half the contents were lying on the floor. Someone had evidently come aboard from Seattle, or perhaps had been on the boat all the time, and had searched my bag, thinking to find my gold poke in it. Half a dozen miners on the boat were found to have lost their pokes and there was a terrific uproar. No one was permitted to disembark until the police had come aboard and had searched everyone. But the lost gold was not found.

\* \* \* \*

Several of us went to a miner's hotel in Seattle, to which we had been recommended before leaving the North. We went to our rooms, cut our beards, shaved and washed, and many a laugh we had when we failed to recognize each other in the hotel lobby after having dressed up in city garb once more. We all set out together, bought revolvers, and armed with these marched in a band to the Government mint, where we deposited our gold for assay and sale.

On the way back we visited a famous saloon, where "Wild-eyed Paddy"—the miner who had "struck it rich" and had provided his men with "ladies" and champagne—had once bought out the entire place for

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

three days and had served free drinks to anyone who cared to walk in. The crowd had been so great and so riotous after the first day, however, that the police had stepped in and closed the place up.

We had not been in Seattle very long before several miners came to see us, claiming that they were from the North and had "gone broke". They asked us if we could give them some help. The usual thing to do, we were told, was to give such men a five-dollar bill apiece, and this we did to a dozen or more.

It was cold and damp in Seattle, and one day a miner friend said to me:

"Why don't we take a trip to Australia and get warmed up? We might find some gold 'down under', too."

Australia! That meant the South Seas! Suddenly I thought of the book *Typee*, and of how much I had been longing to see the places that Melville had described and that Pompey Cæsar had actually visited. Here, perhaps, was my chance.

"All right," I answered promptly. "I'll go."

The very next day we bought round-trip tickets to Australia, and within a week I was off adventuring once again.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### Arrival in Honolulu

WE HAD a rough trip across the Pacific and I was seasick most of the way. The ship stopped for a day at Honolulu and I was glad to get off. Coming from the frozen North, the place looked to me like Paradise indeed.

The smiling faces of the Hawaiian people, and the gentle courtesy with which we were received, had such an effect on my friend and me that shortly after our arrival we called at the shipping office on Fort Street and made arrangements to stay over for another ship. There was one due to call at Honolulu in about ten days.

After we had done this, we hired a hack—the single-horse open carriage that was used in Honolulu in those days—and asked the brown-faced Hawaiian driver to take us for a good drive and then deliver us to some small hotel as near as possible to the sea.

"*Polo lei*," said the driver, with a smile. We found out that meant: "All right!"

I still like to think of that first drive around Honolulu. It seemed to me as though the whole island was a veritable Kew Gardens or indeed the Garden of Eden itself. Our driver took us to the top of Punch Bowl Hill, an extinct volcano, which rises several hundreds of feet in the very centre of the city itself. From there

we looked down on what looked like a green carpet of trees. In front of us was the blue sea, and we could just glimpse our steamer leaving the harbour on its way to Australia. White breakers were coming in over the coral reefs. A number of small fishing boats were dancing on the waves like toys, and suddenly we saw a beautiful full-rigged ship, heeling over in a strong wind, and with a fountain of white spray arching over its bow as it sailed around Diamond Head. I thought I had never seen such a lovely sight before.

Our Hawaiian driver presently took us to a small hotel, which was managed by a jolly-faced, good-natured widow woman, whose late husband had been a *luna* or foreman on a sugar plantation.

"It's very simple here," she told us with a smile, "but I'll guarantee you good food and comfortable beds."

Our good landlady only charged us seven dollars a week for our rooms and board, and it struck me that I could live for a long time without working before my funds would run out! When she discovered that we were miners from the Canadian North, she began to mother us right away, and in the evenings she would bring her Hawaiian friends over and they would play and sing for us for hours on the beach in front of her hotel.

At the end of a week my friend decided that the place would soon "get one". "You'd just become a beachcomber," he said, "and be no use at all. I imagine Australia will be pretty much the same as this, don't

## ARRIVAL IN HONOLULU

you? I don't think I'll go there, after all, but I'll beat it back to 'God's Country' while I can."

Hawaii had quite the opposite effect on me. Almost on landing I had felt absolutely and completely at home. I had *known* that it was a place in which I could be happy. I even had the curious feeling—that seems to come to us all at times for no accountable reason—of having been in Hawaii and among the Hawaiian people before.

A few days after this my friend and I went down to the Steamship Office, and while he received a rebate on his fare from Honolulu to Australia and back, and arranged to sail for Vancouver on the next ship, I asked for a rebate on the whole of my ticket, excepting the part from Vancouver to Honolulu which, of course, I had already used.

The old steamship clerk looked at me intently and then said:

"Can I offer you a little advice, young man? You like it here, don't you? Well, you may get tired of it one day. Some do, you know. You don't want to be without funds to get back if that occurs, and so I suggest that you purchase a ticket for Vancouver right now, and that you also deposit fifty dollars with me, to be used if necessity arises. If you ever do want to go back, the ticket and the money will be here, ready for you to use."

I did what the old man advised, though in my heart I did not believe that I would ever want to go away from this lovely land. (I did not leave it for twelve

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

years and only then to go to England to fight for her in the last War.) After that I counted my money and found that I had some nine hundred dollars left. I put this into the bank and allocated myself so much a week until the following spring. By that time, I decided, I would have made up my mind what I wanted to do. Meanwhile I would settle down to enjoying myself thoroughly.

During that period of holiday in Honolulu I had a splendid time. I spent my days with the native Hawaiians, swimming, canoeing and surfboard riding. Surfboarding I found to be a most exciting sport. It was supposed to have been invented, I learned, by a Goddess named Mamala, who, it was said, was a very beautiful woman and who could transform herself at will into a *mo-o* or crocodile. Mamala was reputed to have been capable of the most extraordinary feats on the surface of the waves, and her followers seemed, in many cases, to fall not far short of her legendary exploits. I shall always carry in my mind the picture of George Freeth, internationally-known swimmer, looking like a bronze statue of some Greek god as, standing on his surfboard he would come travelling at a great speed shoreward on the top of a high wave on to Waikiki Beach.

At night I would go out with my Hawaiian friends torch fishing, for eels and squid or octopi—an exciting experience. A Hawaiian would sit in the bow of the canoe, holding a blazing torch high over his head. This enabled the others in the canoe to see clearly to the

## ARRIVAL IN HONOLULU

bottom of the shallow sea. Some claimed that the eels and octopi were attracted by the bright light. When a fish was seen by a native, he would throw a long, slender, three-pronged harpoon at it, and almost always he would strike the fish and bring it up all shining and wriggling into the canoe. Big eels were hard to kill, and their bite was poisonous, and so these were knocked on the head as quickly as possible after being caught. The natives, however, killed the squirming squid by biting out their eyes! It looked horrible to me when I first saw it done, but eventually I got quite used to it.

\* \* \* \*

My most enjoyable holiday came to an end in an unexpected way. One day a man who was staying at my hotel, and who happened to be the Chief Engineer at the local gasworks, said to me:

"You're an engineer, aren't you?" And when I admitted that I was, he went on: "We're a bit short-handed down at the gasworks. I wonder if you'd care to come down and help us for a while?"

I thought it might prove an interesting experience, so next day I went down with him to the plant. I was put in charge of the engines, which fortunately were of a type with which I was familiar.

The second day I was there, a near catastrophe occurred. My engineer friend came rushing up to me in a state of great excitement.

"A terrible thing has happened," he said. "One of the Japanese has put on too much heat in the gas



generator, and the firebrick's all fused together. It looks as though we won't be able to dig it out and rebrick it in time to keep gas in the holder. If the holder becomes empty, the city mains will be out of gas and if that happens it's highly probable that our company may lose its franchise. Would you mind lending a hand and seeing if there is anything you can suggest to help?"

The large steel gas generator, which was about twenty-five feet high and twelve feet in diameter, was ordinarily filled with firebrick, laid crossways one brick on top of another, so that there were open spaces in between the bricks all the way from the bottom to the top. The process of making gas was simple. The bricks were heated up with an incandescent oil flame for a certain length of time. Then the flame was shut off and crude oil was sprayed on the bricks from above. The intense white heat of the firebricks turned the oil into gas and generated a pressure. The pressure then forced the gas out through a large elbow pipe, then through a tank of water to cool it, and then through tall towers where carbon and other impurities in the gas were washed out. The gas finally passed through a series of purifiers to remove the sulphur, from thence passing into the storage holder and from the holder to the city mains.

The man-holes of the gas generator tower were open when my friend and I arrived on the scene. It was obvious that the heat had been left on so long that the bricks had all fused into a solid mass. The mass would

#### ARRIVAL IN HONOLULU

have to be removed and new bricks put in. Digging the stuff out with picks and crowbars, it was quite evident, would take longer than the gas in the holder would last. Something very drastic would have to be done to save the situation.

The accident had happened early in the afternoon. At five o'clock, people would begin preparing their evening meals and would be drawing on gas heavily. At six o'clock would come the added load of the gas lights, for in Honolulu there was no twilight and darkness came down suddenly like a curtain around six o'clock the year round.

The unfortunate Chief Engineer was frantic. He was the only white man besides myself on the job. The rest of the men were Chinese and Japanese, and they were standing impassively by, willing to do what they were told, but not knowing what to do until then.

"Well," I said, after I had taken a good look at the damage, "it seems to me there is only one thing to do. It means taking a chance. However, if the Company is going to lose its franchise should the gas go out, this gas generator won't be of much use any more, will it?"

"No," the Chief Engineer replied.

"Well," I said, "I can try something that I think may work. Send up town and get a case of dynamite and some caps and fuse."

"Good heavens, man!" my friend exclaimed. "D'you mean you'll try to blow the bricks out with dynamite?"

"Yes," I replied. "That's what I intend to do."

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

"But you might blow up the whole gasworks," he cried.

"I don't think so," I said. "I'm used to handling dynamite. No, I won't blow up the gasworks, but I might ruin the generator. However, if I were in your place, I'd just as soon take a chance on ruining the generator as on losing the gas franchise."

He clapped me on the shoulder.

"We'll try it," he said. "And what's more," he went on earnestly, "if you succeed, you can have my job. I'm 'fed up' with this land life anyway. I'm going back to the sea, where I belong. This shore business never was any good for a marine engineer."

He telephoned for a hack and dashed off in it to one of the plantation supply stores. Soon he was back with the dynamite, caps and fuse.

I made an experiment first with a two-inch length of dynamite, inserting it about a foot up from the bottom of the cylinder. When I lit the fuse, the Chinese and Japanese quietly drifted away. The Chief Engineer and I stood back some distance. Soon the explosion occurred. It sounded as though the whole gasworks were blowing up!

We went back to see what had happened. Except for a slight bulge in one side of the generator, no damage had been done. A heap of loose bricks lay at the bottom, however.

My friend let out a whoop of joy.

"That's fine," he said approvingly. "Go right ahead."

In a few minutes the debris had been cleaned up, and

## ARRIVAL IN HONOLULU

through a man-hole a little higher up I inserted another charge of dynamite and set it off. It was just as successful as the first. And so, with a dozen charges of dynamite, set higher and higher up the cylinder each time, within an hour we had the big steel cylinder quite clean of all bricks and debris and ready to be rebricked right away.

The Chief Engineer shook my hand. "You certainly saved the day," he said.

Then he called all the men, and new bricks were fitted in record time. At last all was ready, the man-holes were closed and sealed, the oil burners turned on, and within an hour sufficient heat had been generated so that the crude oil could be turned on. The gas began to bubble through the water and the carbon began flowing out. Then the holder suddenly stopped falling and gently started to rise again, just as our gas gauge lights had begun to quiver from lack of pressure.

At that moment the General Manager of the Company burst into the generator room. With him was the Chief of Police and a squad of detectives.

"What's going on in here?" he cried excitedly. "We were told that someone was trying to blow up the gas-works. The pressure in my office has gone down to zero."

"You'll find it going up again now," the Chief Engineer said. Then he introduced me to the General Manager and explained to him what had happened and what I had done.

"Now, boss," my good friend concluded, "you'll

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

soon be needing a new man. I'm off to sea again as soon as I can get away. I advise you to hire this fellow in my place."

The General Manager looked me up and down.

"Are you a gas engineer?" he asked.

I drew myself up proudly. "I'm every kind of an engineer," I replied. "I served my apprenticeship in the finest engineering works in the whole world!"

"Well," said the General Manager with a smile, "the job's yours. Think you can learn to make gas?"

"I've watched it being done," I told him, "and if the Chief Engineer will give me a little help for a day or so, I'm sure I'll get along all right."

With the taking over of that job a new life was starting for me once more.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### I Meet Jack London for the First Time

THE Honolulu Gas Company, at the time I first become associated with it, was expanding rapidly, and a few months after my arrival it was found necessary to enlarge the plant.

A complete new set of generating equipment, with new engines and a new holder, were sent for from San Francisco, and in due course they all arrived in the care of a construction engineer. This man and I immediately became good friends and I thoroughly enjoyed myself helping him to erect the new plant.

We had decided to build a steel smokestack which would be one of the tallest on the Islands. This, too, had been ordered from San Francisco. It came to Honolulu in three sections, and with its arrival a new problem faced us.

It was necessary to hoist the sections up quite high, and to rivet them one on top of the other. A very tall mast was needed, and an extra heavy boom, with strong pulley blocks that would take a heavy set of ropes. After considerable search, a mast and boom were brought in from one of the sugar plantations, and the necessary ropes were obtained, but no set of blocks that were strong enough could be found.

I was talking with Mr. Kopke, Chief Engineer of the local ironworks, about our trouble one day.

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

"Well," said Mr. Kopke, "there's a fellow just come in on a yacht. He's going round the world with his wife, so I've heard. He's engaged a new captain here in Honolulu and the Captain's persuaded him to sell off some of his gear. I believe there's two or three sets of heavy blocks to be disposed of. Shall we go down and see if they'd be of any use to you?"

We went over to Pearl Harbour, a few miles from Honolulu, where the yacht was tied up. It was a strongly-built yawl named "The Snark".

"Who owns this boat?" I asked Mr. Kopke, as we made our way on board.

"A writer chap by the name of Jack London," Mr. Kopke replied. "They tell me he's quite famous as a Socialist, too."

I was greatly excited at the prospect of meeting Jack London, whose books were now becoming famous, and who had been in the North, like myself. I would tell him, I promised myself, that I had seen one of his books save a man's reason, if not his life!

I was fated, however, not to see Jack London that time. He was away from his boat and the Captain did not know when he would return. We made a deal with the new Captain, however, for the blocks, and before nightfall they were in use at the gasworks.

The following Saturday afternoon, I went to a ball game with a friend. A few seats away from us, on the grandstand, sat a strikingly-handsome young man. His face reminded me of that on a statue my father had treasured in our London home—the Apollo Belve-

I MEET JACK LONDON FOR THE FIRST TIME

dere. Next to the young man, dressed in soft pink, was an attractive-looking woman.

"What a fine-looking man!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"That's Jack London, the author," my friend replied.

"And who is the charming lady sitting beside him?" I asked.

My friend smiled. "That's the right name for her," he said. "Her name *is* Charmian, as a matter of fact. She is Jack London's wife."

"I would so like to meet them," I said.

"You shall," he promised. "I met them at a party, a few nights ago. They're fine people, and most interesting to talk to. I'll introduce you to them as soon as the game is over."

Unfortunately for me, just before the game ended, the Londons were taken in tow by some of their friends and whisked off in one of the few motor cars then on the Islands.

\* \* \* \*

Two days later, however, I met Jack London at last.

I had become acquainted, since coming to live in Honolulu, with a well-known journalist by the name of Alexander Hume Ford. Ford was trying to tell the world, in his writings, what a wonderful place Honolulu was, especially Waikiki Beach. He was keen, too, on reviving the ancient Hawaiian "sport of kings"—surfboard riding—and of increasing its popularity among the white people and the tourists, who were then just beginning to visit Honolulu.



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

I had been in swimming and was walking up the beach when I saw Ford sitting on the sand with a young man by his side.

"Come here, Harry Strange," Ford called to me. "I want you to meet Jack London."

I sat down with them and we had quite a chat. I remember feeling strangely drawn to Jack from the very start. There was something so disarmingly boyish about him, yet something curiously wise. His conversation soon revealed to me that he had gained his experience of life in an unusually hard school.

We started to discuss the problem of the twenty-eight or so races that lived in Honolulu. There had recently been considerable dissension among them, and prejudice and hatred were being fanned to white heat by the editors of the vernacular newspapers, who were continually writing abusive editorials one against the other. Some actual fighting had occurred, and even a few murders.

"It's all a question of misunderstanding," Ford passionately burst out. "These people are all right in themselves. I know them and I like them all. If they could only get to know each other properly, I'm sure they'd all get along."

"Well," Jack London suggested, "why don't you get them together, Ford? Help them to know each other and see how it works."

"What d'you suggest I do?" Ford asked.

"My experience is," Jack London replied, "that if

#### I MEET JACK LONDON FOR THE FIRST TIME

people eat together, they usually become good friends."

Ford thought for a moment and then he said:

"If I arrange a luncheon for representatives of the different nationalities, would you two come to it?" And, turning to Jack London, he asked: "Would you give a talk, Jack?"

We both promised to be there and Jack London agreed to speak. In a few days Ford had arranged for the luncheon to take place in a room at the Honolulu Y.M.C.A. All the editors of the vernacular newspapers were invited and several other people, too.

The room was crowded. Some of the people, no doubt, came to see Jack London and to hear him talk. Jack certainly "let himself go". He spoke for more than an hour, simply but stirringly, about human beings in general, and of the necessity for all people, of all races, to try to live amicably together and to become good friends.

At the right moment Ford got up and asked:

"Why don't we stop fighting and squabbling with each other and make the best of this lovely, peaceful land?" He suggested that each editor "spit out" there and then just what he had against the other races. No one had a word to say!

Finally Jack London said:

"I've a suggestion to make. Supposing that in the next issue of each of your newspapers, you print an editorial saying the nicest and kindest things you can find to say about some other race? Try it for a change, anyway!"

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The editors all grinned. They said they would do it. And they did!

That luncheon was the first of a regular series, and actually formed the start of the Pan Pacific Club, later to be known as the Pan Pacific Union, and out of that developed the Institute of Pacific Relations, the fame of which has gone ringing around the world.

When I read the names of prominent people from the United States and Canada, and from other countries around the Pacific, attending meetings of the Pan Pacific Institute year by year, I often wonder if any of them know that all the sessions they are holding, and the good work they are doing to promote and to maintain friendship and good will among the various races of the Pacific, really springs from a chance meeting between Alexander Hume Ford, Jack London and myself under a palm tree outside the Seaside Hotel on Waikiki Beach many years ago?

Very soon after this luncheon, Jack London sailed away. To my regret I did not, at that time, meet Charmian, his wife. I did meet her later, however, in her own home in Glen Ellen, California, where I was their guest. Of my friendship with the Londons, more later.

\* \* \* \*

A few months after my promotion to the position of Chief Engineer, the General Manager of the Honolulu Gas Company decided to retire, and to my great astonishment, one of the directors called on me and

#### I MEET JACK LONDON FOR THE FIRST TIME

said that I was offered the job of General Manager on probation for six months if I cared to try it.

I said that I knew nothing of business management and that all I could do would be to apply engineering principles to this new field. The director told me that that would be all right and that I should certainly try my hand at it and see how it worked.

I was fortunate in finding a very willing and able staff, and we all got along famously together from the time I took over until I left the Company, some ten years later. At the end of the first six months my appointment was confirmed and I became the youngest Gas Company General Manager in the world, or so my friend Mr. Brittain, General Manager of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company in San Francisco, later announced to the Pacific Coast Gas Association Annual Convention. I remember how shy I felt as the delegates all turned to look at me and, as I imagined, "sized up" this young Englishman.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### Managing the Honolulu Gas Company

**A**MONG its several hundred employees, the Honolulu Gas Company numbered people of twenty-eight different nationalities.

I soon discovered an easy way of getting along with them. It was to use the "Ford" or "Jack London" technique. That is, to treat each one of them as a fine, decent fellow, and as belonging to a race quite equal in every way to my own.

The men responded immediately, and I found that I had started, within the confines of the Gas Company itself, a miniature Pan Pacific Union. Every three months we had a Company Dinner, to which everybody came. The families of our workers were also looked after. I appointed one man in charge of welfare work. It was his business to keep his ear to the ground and to listen for word of any trouble or sickness that might have developed in any of the homes. This man would quietly tender advice or assistance, and we were always generous in loaning money at no interest, and sometimes we even made special gifts of money when serious cases of necessity arose. Accidents—and this was still long before Workmen's Compensation came in—were always taken care of by the Company in a most generous way.

The consequence of these little, and for the most

#### MANAGING THE HONOLULU GAS COMPANY

part inexpensive attentions to our employees, was that our men became endeared to the Company and were all very proud of it. In all the years that I worked there, we never had a strike nor trouble with the men of any sort. Every Christmas there was a small bonus, according to how well the Company had done during the year, for every employee, from the highest down to the lowest. The President of the Company, Mr. W. R. Castle, was a man with a great heart, and he took pride in himself delivering the finest turkeys that could be bought to each employee's house on Christmas Eve, and he gave as well a small Christmas gift to each separate member of every man's family.

\* \* \* \*

Life was not without its exciting moments at the Gas Company in those days, however. We had one quite serious tragedy, I recall, connected with an old Japanese. He was completely bald and had a very wrinkled face. His teeth were all gone excepting for two large ones in the front, that stuck out of his mouth and wiggled when he talked. He must have been well over sixty years of age, but he looked about a hundred. He was a splendid worker, however, and after a number of years with the Company had saved over a thousand dollars.

One day this old Japanese decided to get married. He sent to Japan for a "picture bride". This was an ingenious arrangement for evading the immigration laws of the United States. Wives of men already in

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Hawaii could come to the Islands, but single girls could not. Thousands of young, unattached Japanese had come to Hawaii, however, and it was considered best for all concerned—it was a quite natural conclusion to come to in such a semi-tropical country as Hawaii—that these young men should be permitted to take wives. The point was—how to get Japanese girls into Hawaii without breaking the law?

The "picture bride" method was finally evolved. The Japanese desiring a wife sent a picture of himself to a marriage broker in Japan with full particulars concerning himself and his requirements. The marriage broker then found one or more Japanese girls willing to marry the young man, and sent their pictures to Hawaii for the prospective bridegroom to select from. The picture chosen was returned to the marriage broker with the sum demanded, which, in the case of our old Japanese, was five hundred dollars. The money was used to cover the broker's fee, the bride's trousseau, her passage money and farewell gifts to her family.

The method then was for the girl to disembark on a part of the wharf at Honolulu near the sea and beyond an imaginary line, on land that was considered to be technically in bond and not yet in Hawaii. The bride and bridegroom would stand on this place and be married. Then, as the man's wife, the girl would be permitted to enter Hawaiian territory.

Now this old Japanese of mine knew that he would never get a bride if he sent his own picture, so he sent

#### MANAGING THE HONOLULU GAS COMPANY

the picture of a young and good-looking friend and signed his own name to it.

The old man went down to meet the ship on which the girl was due to arrive. But she was not there. A letter came instead, saying that she had had a big farewell party and had gambled away, in a friendly game, all the money the Japanese had sent her. If he would send more money, she promised to come on the next ship.

The old fellow sent off more money and some three months later, clad in his best kimono, and all washed and polished up for the event, he went down to the wharf again to meet his bride. By this time he had rented a pretty little bungalow and had furnished it very nicely for their home.

The girl disembarked. She took one look at the wizened, frail old creature and then rushed back on the ship. She told the purser that she had been lured to Hawaii on false pretences and insisted on being taken right back to Japan.

The bridegroom came back to the gasworks with the tears running down his face. In a most ceremonious and dignified fashion he told me his story, shook hands with me and bade me goodbye. Then he went out and bade goodbye to all his fellow-workers, bowing deeply three times to each in true Japanese style. Finally he walked out into the middle of the gasworks yard. There, before anyone could realize what he was doing, he pulled out of his pocket a piece of dynamite fuse, to which was attached a detonating cap. He put the



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

detonating cap in his mouth, closed his teeth on it, and set fire to the fuse. For a moment everyone was too horror-stricken to move. Then we rushed towards him. But it was too late. When we were still some distance away, the cap exploded and blew off the top of his head!

\* \* \* \*

I myself had an unpleasant experience with a Japanese one day.

There was a time, during my residence in Hawaii, when diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan regarding the vexed question of immigration became very strained. People were frightened that the Japanese in Honolulu might get too strong and perhaps start some kind of trouble. (About one-third of the entire population was Japanese at the time I was there.)

One morning I could not get a conveyance to take me down to work, so I started to walk. It was necessary to pass through a district known as "Iwilei", or the district of "Evil Ways" as it was commonly called, where lived the women of "easy virtue".

The day was wet and the road was a foot deep in mud. For about half a mile, however, there was a narrow wooden footpath, some eighteen inches wide, set above the mud.

As I was walking down this footpath, I met two husky-looking Japanese men. The one in front was a tall, ugly fellow, with a scowling face. There was plenty of room for us to pass each other, if we took

#### MANAGING THE HONOLULU GAS COMPANY

some care. But instead of moving over, the Japanese elbowed me to one side and pushed me off into the mud. As he did so he muttered a filthy imprecation regarding "American swine".

I was infuriated. I jumped up and struck him and, happening to catch him on the side of the head, upset him so that he in turn fell into the mud.

He sprang to his feet, drew from a long cane which he carried a slender sword some two feet long and dashed at me with it upraised. I fell backwards under his attack and lay helpless in the mud. He leaped on me, put his knee on my chest and his left hand on my throat. He then lifted the sword and brought the sharp blade down with all the force he could on the crown of my head.

By a miracle the point of the sword caught in the dirt. Only a part of the blade struck me. Instead of cleaving my head from pate to neck, it opened up a deep gash, several inches long, down the centre of my head. The blood spurted out like a fountain and I lost consciousness. Before everything went black, however, I noticed that the man and his friend dashed across the street into one of the small houses owned by the women, and numbered 27.

In a short while some people came along. They picked me up, carried me to a hack and drove me to the hospital. Here my wound was attended to and I spent a week in bed. Happily I recovered completely, without the wound becoming infected, as was at first feared it might do.

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Naturally the police were at once hot on the man's trail. They soon found out his name and that of his companion, and some nine months later they caught him on the Island of Maui. He was arrested and brought back to Honolulu for trial. It appeared that he was the leader of a gambling gang and also the head of a group that preyed on the unfortunate women of the "Iwilei" district.

The lawyer for the defence produced twelve witnesses, who all swore that at the moment the attack was said to have occurred in Honolulu, the accused man was acting in a Japanese theatrical performance on the Island of Maui.

"My client," said the attorney for the defence, "is an actor."

"Yes," remarked the prosecutor, "he's a 'bad actor' all right!"

There were no witnesses for the prosecution excepting myself. All I could do was to swear that he was the man. He had very peculiar eyebrows, thick and bushy, that went up towards his temples at the outer edges like those of Mephistopholes. He also had a sharp nose and very bright eyes. I would have known him anywhere in the world.

The attorney for the defence asked me, with elaborate carelessness:

"I suppose the whole thing happened very quickly?"

"Yes, it did," I agreed.

"How long would you say it took?" he wanted to know.

#### MANAGING THE HONOLULU GAS COMPANY

"Oh, about a minute," I replied.

At that the attorney for the defence turned to the Judge, and with a smile of triumph on his face, he said:

"This gentleman—who no doubt was seriously injured by *someone*—wants the Court to believe that after having only seen a man for a total period of one minute—and remember, your Honour, to a white man all Japanese look alike—that he can recognize a face instantly after a period of nine months!"

"What have you to say to that?" the Judge asked me.

I replied: "It's true that I only saw this man for one minute. But I saw much more than that. I stared death in the face for the interminable time of sixty seconds, and if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget this man's face as it hung over mine as he tried to kill me."

The jury found the man guilty and he was sentenced to three years in jail.

There is a sequel to this story. Just before the man was released from prison, he sent a message to me by another Japanese. It was to the effect that when he came out "he would fix me for keeps!"

In due course he was freed and took up his residence in one of the houses in the Iwilei district, almost next door to the gasworks. Every time I went in and out of the works, he would stand at the door, waving his cane at me and glaring in an evil way.

Just at this time the Gas Company, in order to expand its premises, set out to purchase several of the houses in the Iwilei district, so that it could acquire the

land on which they stood. Among the houses was the one in which my enemy lived.

I sent word to him that on the first day of the following month he would be evicted. He dared me to put him out!

When the first of the month came, at nine o'clock in the morning a crowd of several hundred Japanese gathered to see "the show" that the man had promised them. All thought that I would march up with a policeman and order him out. He would resist, a skirmish would ensue, and perhaps someone would be killed.

I, however, had made other plans. I had some of my men take a long, thick rope and run it all around the six light frame houses, of which his was one, and which were all attached together, and then the rope was taken back through the gaswork premises to the pulley wheel on a stationary engine that could not be seen from outside. At a given signal the engine was started, the rope tightened and in one fell swoop the whole of the six flimsy dwellings were pulled down like a pack of cards.

Our friend, the Japanese, had to be helped out of the mass of debris by his friends.

The bystanders began to laugh. They laughed so much that it was more than the man could stand. He slunk away and was never, to my knowledge, seen in those parts again.

Incidentally, a rather embarrassing contretemps occurred when these houses in Iwilei were pulled down.

As I have already explained, this was the "red light" district of Honolulu. There were women there of

#### MANAGING THE HONOLULU GAS COMPANY

every nationality under the sun, principally, however, Japanese. There was a sprinkling of Koreans, Portuguese, Philipinos, and the odd Chinese, but no Hawaiians or even part-Hawaiians.

At the time of the pulling down of the houses, considerable attention was directed to Iwilei. One of the leading churches in Honolulu appointed a select Committee to visit the girls and investigate the whole situation.

One of the girls complained that the rents of the houses were far too high. "Whoever owns these houses is exploiting us," she said.

The idea now occurred to the Committee that the real guilty parties were perhaps the people who owned the property and who rented it for immoral purposes and so made their profits out of the lives of these unfortunate girls. It was suggested that the names of these people should be found out and held up to shame.

Investigation revealed that the houses were administered, and the rents collected, by a large Trust Company. The Trust Company represented a client who owned property all over the city. What, the Committee demanded, was the client's name?

The Trust Company gave it. It was the name of a prominent citizen, a pillar of the Committee's own church! In fact, the name belonged to one of the most respected men in town.

Be it said for the gentleman in question, however, that he was really quite innocent in the whole affair. He was not only an extremely wealthy but an extreme-

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

ly busy man. He owned houses and property in Oahu and on the other islands as well. He left all his business in the hands of the Trust Company, who felt it their duty to buy and sell property and to change his investments from time to time in order to keep his estate in a sound condition, and in the course of these complicated transactions the houses at Iwilei had somehow been acquired.

The end of the whole business was that the entire property at Iwilei was ordered by the owner to be torn down, and in its place there was built a set of model workmen's dwellings, to house the people who worked in the canning plants nearby, which were now growing in number.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### Honolulu Life and Friendships

SOON after coming to live in Honolulu, I was married, and in the course of a few years I had three fine little sons.

For a long time I rented a cottage next door to the jail. The Honolulu Jail was famous because it was the place of which the story was told that on the gates there once was a notice to the effect that "All prisoners not in by six p.m. will be locked out for the night!" I did not actually see this notice myself, but the Chief Jailor assured me that it had actually been there at one time. In any case, he told me, it made no difference whether the notice was there or not; the prisoners all behaved themselves well and could come and go as they pleased! "Why, I've got more than half a dozen fellows in here," he said to me one day, "whose time expired years ago, and they simply refuse to leave. They are happy here and this is the only home they know!"

My house had a nice garden, which was luxuriant all the year round with a growth of beautiful tropical plants and trees. The care of this garden, however, was more than either I myself, my wife, or the Japanese couple who did the cooking and housework for us, could manage.

One day the Governor of the jail said to me:

"Why don't you employ one of my prisoners to work



in your garden? All it will cost you will be his meals. The Government will be saved some expense for food, you'll have a better garden, and the prisoner will be kept busy at healthy work."

To this I agreed. The man who came to work for me was a part-Hawaiian, part-Portuguese. He was a very affable old fellow and turned out to be an excellent gardener. He also took the greatest delight in playing with my children, and they in turn became exceedingly fond of John.

At my gardener's suggestion, I asked and received permission from the Chief Jailor for leave for the prisoner to go out of bounds, and after this the old man frequently took my boys out in a boat fishing the whole day long. They loved the stories that John told them. It was not, however, until our prisoner-gardener had been with us for several months that I discovered that he was in prison for life because he had cut off his wife's head on learning that she had been unfaithful to him!

Conditions were pleasant in Hawaii in those days. There were very few tourists. Everyone knew everyone else, and all of us, as members of Ford's Outrigger Canoe Club, enjoyed life to the full. I thought then that there could not possibly be on earth a more agreeable place in which to live and, after an absence of some twenty-five years, I still think so to-day.

The Royal Hawaiian Hotel was then in the centre of the city, and it still retained the manners and habits that had been customary under the Royal Regime. The beach hotel was the Moana and most of the visitors who

## HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

patronised it were people who came from the other Islands and occasional business men from the Pacific Coast.

It was my friend Ford who popularized Waikiki Beach and introduced its beauties to the world. He had, however, to "step carefully" in his advertising methods, for he met with considerable opposition from many of the *kamaainas*, or old-timers, who did not want the peaceful Island life disturbed. I remember one occasion when Ford, waxing enthusiastic before a meeting of the Honolulu Ad. Club, used the expression: "We must boost Hawaii!" An elderly gentleman, born on the Islands, rose to his feet and exclaimed indignantly: "I object to the use of that etymological monstrosity, the word 'boost'. We want none of it on these Islands."

\* \* \* \*

One of my particular friends was Captain Henri Berger, originator and leader of the famous Royal Hawaiian Band. Captain Berger was the man who headed the band that led the German Army into Paris, after the surrender of 1870. Later he came to Honolulu and formed the band that afterwards became famous all over the world. He had the honorary title of Captain from the German Army and was always addressed that way.

Captain Berger made his bandsmen dress in pure white linen suits and he would inspect them carefully every morning.

"I make them dress in white," he once told me, "be-

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

cause if they've been down to that *verdammen* dirty fish market, they get stains of fish on their clothes, and the white shows the marks right away. I make them change at once so that we won't have a concert of odours as well as a concert of sounds!"

Captain Berger, as he grew older, became more and more deaf. In his later years a concert by his band was one grand noise, with the brasses dominating over all. He made his men play louder and louder, in order that *he* could hear them, and what Captain Berger could hear deafened the rest of the listeners. For all that, his music was greatly appreciated, and crowds would listen to his band when it played each evening in one of the various parks. Many a good singer, too, was developed by Captain Berger, for he was a musician to his fingertips.

Captain Berger loved to tell stories of his boon companion and friend, the late King Kalakaua, for whom the Captain had started the band. When the King had drunk a little too much heady liquor, he would insist on marching at the head of his band. Round and round the Parliament Buildings they would march at midnight, the King himself beating the drum. Captain Berger would expostulate with the King: "Your Majesty! This is undignified! It is ill-fitting a King!" To which, Captain Berger said, the King would reply: "Well, if I'm a King, surely I've as much right to beat the drum as this *kanaka* you call a musician whom you've hired and who I pay to do it for me! Why should he have all the fun?"

## HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

Captain Berger was one of the party who had a hand in the famous poker game, the story of which went around the world at the time. In this game, King Kalakaua's friends played a practical joke on him by dealing him four kings and another of the players four aces.

There was a big pot on the table, and the King bet all he had, even being willing, he said, to throw in his crown for good measure.

Finally the hands were shown. King Kalakaua had four kings. The other player showed his four aces. To everyone's astonishment, however, Kalakaua raked in the pot.

"But, your Majesty," politely protested the player who had held the winning hand, "my four aces beat your four kings!"

"No they don't," retorted the King. "I've got *five* Kings! I'm one myself, remember!"

\* \* \* \*

The late Wallace R. Farrington, then editor of the Honolulu *Star Bulletin*, and later Governor of the Islands, was also my good friend. I recall one amusing experience I had with him.

Mr. Farrington had told me of a certain little-known valley on the Island of Kauai, to which valley the tide only allowed ingress and egress once a year. Overland the valley could be approached only by way of a difficult and almost-forgotten trail that led down a steep mountain side that, in the long-distant past, had

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

been descended by means of long native fibre ladders.

Mr. Farrington said that he had it on good authority that most of the Hawaiians living in this valley had never set eyes on a white person. They were, he believed, completely self-contained in their economy. He proposed that a few of us join him in an expedition to explore this interesting place.

About ten of us decided to make the trip. We equipped ourselves with a guide and with two long rope ladders, which we had specially made for us at the sail loft in Honolulu, and which incidentally cost each of us quite a sum.

We arrived at the Island of Kauai and after travelling for a whole day over very rough country on horseback, we came at last to the edge of the valley we sought, and through our field glasses we could see the whole panorama below. The valley was dotted with grass huts and people were moving about.

"What a wonderful sight!" Mr. Farrington exclaimed. "D'you realize, my friends, that we're looking on exactly the same kind of native life that Captain Cook observed when he first discovered the Sandwich Islands in 1778!"

The ladder was lowered and down we went. At sixty feet we came to a narrow ledge, along which we walked for a short distance. Then the other rope ladder was let down. Finally, after many hours of hard work, stumbling along narrow trails, we arrived at the bottom of the valley.

A number of smiling Hawaiian people—men, wom-

## HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

en and children—came forward to greet us. They were all dressed in the ancient Hawaiian costume, the men in *malos*, or loin cloths, and the women in grass skirts.

Mr. Farrington, who spoke a little Hawaiian, told the people the reason we had come. He addressed his remarks to a lovely-looking Hawaiian girl, who seemed to be a sort of leader among them. She had long black hair hanging down each side of her smiling, golden-brown face, and a bright-coloured hibiscus flower was stuck at a saucy angle behind one of her ears. She wore a *lei* or wreath of ilema blossoms around her neck.

When Mr. Farrington had finished his little talk, the girl spoke.

"We are most happy to welcome you here, Mr. Farrington," she said.

We almost fell flat with astonishment. Here was one of these aborigines, as we thought, who were supposed never to have seen white people in their lives before, speaking perfect English and addressing Mr. Farrington by name!

"Good heavens!" Mr. Farrington cried. "D'you know me?"

"Well, I should know you, Mr. Farrington," the girl replied. "You see, I've been one of your stenographers at the *Star Bulletin* for the last three years."

(The girl, it appeared, had recently come to the Island to visit her people during her vacation. Mr. Farrington said afterwards that never in his life had he realized just how much a girl's form and features

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

could change when she left civilized clothes behind, let down her hair and decked herself with flowers!)

How we all laughed about it. And how foolish we all felt. So much so that we made a solemn agreement among ourselves not to say a word about the experience to anyone when we got back, for fear of being teased. But the news leaked out somehow, and it was a long time before we heard the end of it from our jovial Honolulu friends.

\* \* \* \*

After I had been in Honolulu a few years, I took up a new residence on the gentle slope of one of the mountains immediately behind the city. There I found living next door to me an extremely interesting and much-loved couple—Colonel and Mrs. C. P. Iaukea.

The Iaukeas were pure Hawaiians and belonged to the old aristocracy of the Islands. Colonel Iaukea was a highly-educated, courteous-mannered and much-travelled man. He had been Chamberlain to King Kalakaua and had represented the King at Queen Victoria's Jubilee in London. He had also, on several occasions, been a special plenipotentiary from Hawaii to Great Britain, to France, and to other countries in the world.

At the time I knew him he was one of the trustees of the deposed Queen Lydia Kamakaeha Liliuokalani's estate. (Queen Liliuokalani, who died in November, 1917, was the last sovereign of the Kingdom of Hawaii, and was sister and successor to the far-famed and

## HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

much-travelled King Kalakaua.) Mrs. Iaukea was one of the Queen's Ladies-in-waiting.

Colonel Iaukea knew the Hawaiian people and their history as well as, if not better than, anyone else on the Islands, and I spent many happy evenings in his home, discussing with him the rich past of Hawaii, when the Islands were a monarchy ruled over by Hawaiian sovereigns, and when the people themselves had been well-to-do. Colonel Iaukea had a most remarkable collection of beautiful old koa wood calabashes, lovely feathered cloaks, helmets and kahilis, and other curios. A glass case, covering one entire side of his dining-room, was filled with decorations bestowed on him by different countries. Though he had fallen on less fortunate days, so far as money was concerned, he refused to part with any of his beloved treasures. He and his wife gradually withdrew more and more from social life and lived, as time went on, almost entirely with their memories of the past.

Colonel Iaukea once took me, as a quiet spectator, to the installation of a new member in the famous Order of Chiefs, a Hawaiian Secret Society.

The ceremony was held on a mountain side, near a great cave, on a spot where, so Colonel Iaukea told me, identically the same ceremony had been performed for more than fifty generations, perhaps even for a hundred. (Time, with Hawaiian Chiefly families, is counted in generations, not years. Colonel Iaukea himself could recite the names of his forebears for over



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

forty generations. His grandfather, he told me, could recite them for over sixty.)

The ceremony was held around midnight, at a time in the month when there was no moon. The effect of dozens of lighted torches, reflected against the dark mountain side, lighting up the yawning mouth of the cave and glowing on the gorgeously-apparelled figures of those taking part, was awe-inspiring in the extreme. The Royal Kahilis, great standards made of feathers, some six feet high and a foot and a half or more in diameter, in colours of black, red and yellow, and with handles of koa wood or native mahogany, had been brought forth for the occasion. Members of the Chiefly families were dressed in the old-time richly-coloured feather head-dresses and feather cloaks. The officiating priest was a particularly magnificent-looking man, who towered above the rest of the tall figures. His head-dress and cloak, Colonel Iaukea told me, were worth a fortune.

"But I thought all those valuable things were in the Bishop Museum," I told Colonel Iaukea afterwards.

"Yes," he answered quietly, "they are supposed to be. But now you know that they are not *all* there, don't you?"

The affair lasted for three hours and I was deeply impressed with the dignity and grace of those fine-looking men as they moved through the various offices of the ancient ceremony to the accompaniment of the beating of drums, the blowing of conch shells and the

## HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

high notes of the nose flutes. It took one back to the mysteries of the far-distant past.

\* \* \* \*

The most interesting person of all that I met in Hawaii, and one I felt particularly honoured to number among my friends, was the late Queen Liliuokalani herself.

Queen Liliuokalani, at the time I knew her, was a striking-looking old lady, with thin, aristocratic features and jet black hair flecked with grey. She had a dignified and regal bearing, but there was an unutterable expression of tragedy in her rather narrow-set dark eyes.

It has always seemed to me that the Queen was unfairly treated by the Americans when they took over Hawaii. They expropriated all her property, and to the end of her days the Queen fought a fierce, albeit a losing fight, with the American Congress to have her personal property restored. The Queen's tastes and requirements were simple and few, but she needed the revenue from her property to support her many charities. For years it had been the custom for Hawaiian Royalty to look after Hawaiian families in need and, since the coming of the white man, there were more in need than ever before. I once heard the Queen say:

"If the white people had not come to the Islands, there never would have been so many Hawaiian people in distress!" And then, bitterly: "The white missionaries came here to save us, they said. With one hand

they gave us a tract of paper to read, and while we were reading it, with the other hand they took away a tract of land."

It is true, as the Queen said, and as many other Hawaiians have also claimed, that when the missionaries first came to Hawaii, the Hawaiian people were rich—so far as owning land was concerned, for they owned it all, of course—and that the missionaries were poor. It is also true that now, after the lapse of a hundred years or so, the Hawaiians are poor and, generally speaking, own nothing, and that the descendants of the missionaries, again speaking in general terms, are wealthy and own a great deal of the land. There is, however, one factor to be remembered in this connection, which is that the Hawaiians' present condition is not the result of the coming of the *missionaries* to the Islands but of the coming of *the white people*. White people came to the Islands long before the missionaries, and large numbers came after the missionaries had arrived, and it is the influence of the white men—first the whalers and then the traders—I believe, that has impoverished the Hawaiians in land and reduced them so pitifully in numbers.

In later years I have seen somewhat the same thing in Canada with the North American Indians, who inhabited the western plains before the white man came. I feel acutely ashamed of my own race when I think of the state of extreme poverty and degradation in which I have seen Indians living on the reservations, a poverty and a degradation made all the more shocking when one

## HONOLULU LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

recalls to mind the pictures of these once noble red people to be seen in paintings on the walls of Canadian Legislative halls.

I became well acquainted with the descendants of the original missionary families in Hawaii, and my own studied opinion is, granted the Hawaiians had to be dispossessed and disinherited by the white men, that the influence of the missionaries has been good. The religious training and beliefs of these zealous men inculcated in them, and in their descendants, sentiments of pity and compassion, and their influence, I am sure, has been a steadying one on the people of the Islands as a whole, and has perhaps resulted in white people generally behaving somewhat better towards the Hawaiians than they otherwise might have done.

While my boys were still quite small, I had the misfortune to lose my wife. My mother, however, came out immediately from England to care for my sons and to manage my home.

Almost from the very beginning, my mother became good friends with the deposed Queen. Queen Liliuokalani liked my mother because she was English. The Queen had many happy memories of England, having spent some time at the Court of Queen Victoria as a girl when she had visited England. My mother used to take tea with Queen Liliuokalani at least once a week, and the gentle old Hawaiian lady never tired of talking about London and about London life. Before my mother left the Islands, some years later, the Queen

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

presented her with a copy of her own book—*Hawaii, by Hawaii's Queen*, which she autographed with an expression of affection and good will.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### Visiting the other Islands

**E**ACH year I was able to take a vacation, and in the course of time I visited the mainland of the United States several times; also China and Japan; and I explored, as well, as many as I could of the various Islands in the Hawaiian group.

Some of these islands are much less known, and some of them, I think, are even more beautiful than the Island of Oahu, on which the city of Honolulu stands, although Oahu, of course, is a veritable paradise to one who is not used to semi-tropical countries.

I well remember one particularly interesting walking trip I made around the entire island of Oahu. It took me a whole week. I saw things that time that I had passed by on other faster journeys on horseback and by car, and I was able to stop here and there and to make side trips into the mountain valleys and to explore them to my heart's content.

One day, at a little place called Hauula, where there was a lovely curving bay with a clean white sandy beach, I suddenly saw, about half a mile in from the shore on the top of a hill, a Hawaiian energetically waving a flag. There were no ships or boats in sight, and I wondered what on earth he might be doing.

All at once, from a little encampment at the foot of the hill, there dashed out about a dozen men. They

rushed down to the shore, and launched, with much bustle and excitement, four Hawaiian canoes. They rowed speedily out to sea, and some distance out I could plainly see them lowering their nets into the water. These nets were joined together and stretched clear across the narrow entrance to Hauula bay.

"What's going on?" I asked one of the boatmen, when the canoes finally returned to shore.

"*Akule!*" he exclaimed, excitedly. "*Nui nui akule!*" *Akule* is a fish, about eight to ten inches in length, a kind of South Sea mackerel, and very good to eat. The man stationed on the hill—the "Watcher for *Akule*"—had seen a big school of these fish come into the harbour, and had notified the fishermen below by signals. They had at once gone out and had secured, in this enclosed lagoon which they had now actually made into a large private fishpond, many thousands of *akule*. These they would take out, from day to day, I learned, and ship them to Honolulu as the fish market could absorb them. What an easy way to fish, I thought!

During that walking tour around Oahu I also saw, in one quiet, secluded valley on the windward side, what appeared to be a very fine European-built, tropical-style house. One side door was ajar. I knocked, but receiving no reply, walked in. There was not a soul in the house, nor obviously had been for many months, perhaps for years. The house was beautifully furnished with what had once been fine Oriental rugs on the floors, good paintings and prints on the walls, expensive silver and chinaware in the glassed-in cup-

#### VISITING THE OTHER ISLANDS

boards, and some excellent pieces of statuary here and there. Everything, however, was in a state of utter ruin and decay. I found out afterwards that a wealthy gentleman from England had built the house and furnished it, having become intrigued with the Island and with that particular spot; then he had suddenly become tired of it all, and had simply packed up and gone away, saying that he would come back some time. He had never done so, however, and there was the house and there were the furnishings, just as he had left them.

Hauula was a lovely, restful place, and I fell in love with it to the extent that with a friend I bought a piece of land on the beach, and right over the sea we built a kind of beach house on stilts. My friend was a professional musician, a master of almost every stringed instrument, and particularly gifted on the guitar. Many a happy week-end did we spend in that quiet retreat, a group of congenial friends of several different nationalities, in the day-time exploring the beauties of the seashore, and the mountains and valleys nearby, and in the evening playing, singing and dancing, often until

“Daylight was dawning,

And the little birds were singing in the trees,”  
to use the words of a popular *hapa-haole* song.

Almost every bay and valley of this particular territory had an ancient legend connected with it, and the few Hawaiians who lived there would relate the old stories to those accepted into their inner confidence and friendship.

Near Hauula, for instance, I was shown an ancient



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Hawaiian Temple, where many believed the gods still held full sway, and where, it was said, always in carefully lowered tones, some of the old Hawaiians still met occasionally to practise their ancient religious rites.

Nearby, too, in Kaliuawaa Valley, were the Sacred Falls. At the Falls I often listened to the curious and most uncanny voice-like sound which, Hawaiians said, was the laughter of an ancient god who still lived there, and who guarded the Temple of Hauula. The god was laughing, the Hawaiians used to say, at the stupidity of the white people for being so eternally busy about nothing!

On the Island of Maui, some hundred and fifty miles from Oahu, is the world's greatest and largest extinct volcano—Haleakala. It is some twenty miles in circumference, and about half a mile deep. The floor of it is studded with red-coloured cones, which once spouted molten lava. I shall never forget the first time I saw the sun rise from behind the lip of the crater of Haleakala. The rosy colour seemed to come streaming in through the various cracks and crevices like liquid light. Just as beautiful on a clear day was the sight from Haleakala of the two snow-clad peaks of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, rising from the Island of Hawaii, a hundred and fifty miles away, and appearing like two clear-cut, glittering diamonds as, invariably wreathed in billowing clouds of lacy white mist, they seemed to hang suspended in the sky.

On the Island of Hawaii, the largest of the group, I visited the famous Parker Ranch, said to be one of the

#### VISITING THE OTHER ISLANDS

biggest cattle ranches in the world. It was from this ranch, a few years ago, that a group of Hawaiian cowboys went to attend the famous American Pendleton Cowboy Round-up, and the Parker Ranch boys brought back with them to Hawaii most, if not all, of the championships for wild-horse riding, bucking contests, roping and so forth.

On Hawaii, as I have just related, are the two highest island mountains in the world—Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, both of them over thirteen thousand feet, their peaks covered with perpetual snows.

On the side of Mauna Loa is the active volcano, Kilauea, which I visited many times. While I lived on the Islands, Professor Thomas A. Jaggar, the eminent volcanist, set up his observatory near the crater. Kilauea then was quite active. It certainly was an awe-inspiring sight to stand on the lip of the crater and see, a few hundred feet below one, acres and acres of boiling, bubbling, turbulent, red-hot lava. The Hawaiians believe that the Goddess of Fire, Madame Pele, lives in this volcano, and they thought, when Dr. Jaggar came there, that she would be very angry to have a white man trying to pry out her secrets, and that one day she would send out boiling lava to destroy parts of the Island in revenge, as she had done many times in the past.

On the Island of Kauai, called the Garden Island, there are several real rivers. All the islands, however, abound with little streams. Hawaiian legends say that every stream or river that flows to the sea is for ever

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

telling, in its gurgling voice, the story of all that has happened adjacent to the land over which the stream or river flows. The history of Hawaii will never be forgotten, say the Hawaiians, as long as the streams and rivers flow and as long as Hawaiians have their *alii* or chiefs and their *kahunas* or priests to interpret the whisperings of the waters.

On all the islands, too, there are beautiful waterfalls, flowing down the mountain sides, some of them showing perpetual rainbows from the mist of their wind-blown spray. One of the most beautiful sights I shall ever treasure in my mind is that of a young, naked Hawaiian girl, diving from a high rock into a fern-encircled pool in Kahili Valley against the background of a rainbow-hung waterfall, her black hair streaming down her back, her gleaming golden-brown body seeming to be sliding down the very rainbow itself.

\* \* \* \*

Once I obtained permission to visit the famous Leper Settlement on the Island of Molokai. I never had the courage to go there a second time.

Many people shun Molokai because they erroneously think that it is inhabited solely by lepers. This is not so. The truth is that Molokai is a beautiful island well worth anyone's visit. The Leper Settlement occupies only a small part of it—a few acres on a peninsula that nestles at the base of a towering mountain, almost impossible to climb, so that the few lepers who are there, in this practically inaccessible place, are com-

#### VISITING THE OTHER ISLANDS

pletely separated from the rest of the Island of Molokai, and from all the other people on it.

As I stood by Father Damien's grave, at lovely Kalawao, in company with some of the priests and lay brothers who were ministering to the unfortunates at that time, and as I listened to the quiet recital by the priest-in-charge of the work that had been done by Father Damien and his compassionate helpers, the full tragedy of it all seemed almost to engulf me, and I could not help but feel that in that hallowed grave rested a martyr as great as any of whom history has to relate. No wonder, I told myself, the Hawaiian people hold the memory of Father Damien, Father Joseph, and the many anonymous Roman Catholic sisters and nuns, in such high and affectionate regard. No wonder, too, they hold in such great esteem the memory of the great author, Robert Louis Stevenson, for they do not forget the stirring defence he made of Father Damien when the Rev. H. G. Gage, a clergyman of Honolulu, once spoke slightly of Father Damien and his work.

The word leprosy, with Hawaiians, is synonymous with extreme sadness and despair. If the Hawaiian people have one outstanding racial trait, that is particularly deeply ingrained in them, it is the love of home, of family life, and of one another. They cannot bear to be separated from each other, and the most dreadful thing that can happen in a Hawaiian family is for one of its members to develop leprosy and have to be sent to Molokai. Such a calamity is considered to be far worse than death, because the Christian faith

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

gives at least some hope of a better future life in the other world, whereas, when one is sent to Molokai to the Leper Settlement, it is to be condemned to a life sentence of perhaps many years of increasing anguish.

One of the saddest sights I ever saw—a sight made all the more poignant by the beauty of the surroundings in which it took place—was the leaving of the lepers for Molokai. The Hawaiians are an emotional people. They do not believe in hiding what they feel, and at funerals there is, as is customary with other children of nature in different parts of the world, much weeping and wailing and many loud expressions of grief. The leaving of the lepers was considered to be the same as a funeral, and the weeping and the wailing were accompanied by veritable torrents of tears. Crowds had gathered on the wharf at Honolulu for a last farewell between those who were going to a living death and those who were going back to face long years of loneliness and grief. Partings took place between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, and between lovers and friends of long standing. It was heart-rending beyond words.

(In recent years, I understand, these leavings of the lepers in numbers no longer take place. People are removed quietly and singly, and the leave-takings are in private, which, of course, is better for the feelings of all.)

The number of those sent to the Leper Settlement is growing less and less every year. In fact, the actual number of those who contract the dread disease is now

#### VISITING THE OTHER ISLANDS

comparatively small, and only a small part of this small percentage is sent to Molokai. Let it be said, to the everlasting credit of the Government of the United States, and of the Territory of Hawaii, that no money, thought or care has been spared to try to make the lepers on Molokai as happy and comfortable as the terrible circumstances of their isolation and the nature of their disease will permit. There is now a fine receiving station and temporary hospital at Kahili, where people may go to receive treatment for a year or two when they first contract the disease and where, with the new advances in medical science, and particularly with the use of chaulmoogra oil, frequent complete cures of leprosy in its early stages are effected, so that many of the victims may never have to go to Molokai at all.

While I was still living in Honolulu, there was a tremendous and unprecedented stir about leprosy. A white man arrived in Honolulu from the Mainland one day, stating that he had a cure for leprosy. He had a certain salve that he administered, and many a Hawaiian, with bad sores, some of which were considered to be leprosy by members of the family, was treated and miraculously cured.

I must here mention that it was the custom among Hawaiians, in those days before the Kahili Station was established, to attempt to hide relations afflicted with sores from the medical authorities as long as possible, in order, of course, to keep the sufferers from being sent to Molokai. There were always a few persons, there-

fore, thought by the Hawaiians themselves to be afflicted with leprosy in its early stages, and yet of whom the authorities knew nothing.

Word of the man's activities came to the ears of the Government. An effort was made to stop him from operating on the grounds that he was not a qualified doctor. The man immediately went into partnership with a local practitioner whose ethics were not particularly high and continued to make his cures as before.

Finally this man demanded of the authorities that he be sent to Molokai. He guaranteed that he would effect the cure of many people there. So convinced had the Hawaiians by this time become of his extraordinary powers, that public meetings were held and excitement reached a high pitch.

Facilities were made available for the so-called "doctor" to make some experiments on known lepers—that is, on those who had been given the efficient and unfailing blood test for leprosy. It was soon found that his salve had no effect whatsoever on these people, and later it was proved that those whom his salve *had* cured had been people suffering from sores that looked like leprosy but that were not leprous sores at all. Others he had cured were suffering from a quite common disease among Hawaiians, known as "false leprosy", which many claimed was brought on by mere *fear* of the disease.

Because of its dreadfulness, writers and novelists have always steered away from the subject of leprosy.

#### VISITING THE OTHER ISLANDS

It has always seemed to me, however, that there must be material for innumerable stories to be written about the lepers and their lives.

During recent years it has been the practice not to make any mention of leprosy at all, and to pretend, so far as white people are concerned, that the Leper Settlement on Molokai does not exist. The fear of the Island people is, of course, that publicity about the lepers and leprosy may be grossly exaggerated and misinterpreted in the minds of strangers who hear of it, and that consequently the general reputation of the Hawaiian Islands and the so lucrative tourist trade would suffer.

The important things to be remembered about leprosy in Hawaii are: first, that white people are practically immune to it; second, that of the Hawaiians themselves, the percentage affected was never very great and that it is now fast dwindling; and third, that the area on Molokai, where the Settlement is situated, is but a very small part of the Island of Molokai itself.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### The Jack Londons At Home

**B**EFORE Jack London came back to visit Honolulu for the second time, I made a trip to the Pacific Coast and called on him at his home at Glen Ellen, in "the Valley of the Moon". (The Jack London Ranch, which comprises some fourteen hundred acres of forested mountain side, interspersed with clearings bounded by streams in canyons and ravines, is situated some fifty miles north from San Francisco.)

Here, for the first time, I met Charmian London, Jack's wife, and also had an opportunity of seeing how Jack managed his ranch and how he did his writing work.

I found Charmian London to be a most gracious and efficient hostess, an expert rider, swimmer and dancer, and a most accomplished pianist. She has since proved herself, too, to be an able writer, and has published three or more books, one of them *The Life of Jack London*, in two volumes, to my mind by far the finest biography of Jack that has yet been written.

Charmian and I immediately became good friends.

I have since heard many discussions as to the part that Charmian played in Jack's life. She was, of course, his second wife, and it has been said that she stole him from his first wife. This I do not at all believe to be true. Jack himself denied it to me once, in the following words:

## THE JACK LONDONS AT HOME

"They say I fell in love with Charmian before I separated from my first wife. That's not true, Harry. I did, however, fall in love with a mistress, but that mistress was my work. It was my work that came between me and my wife and that finally separated us."

Jack London's first marriage might have been a happy one if he had remained in the same station he had been in when his marriage had taken place. The artistic flame within him, however, that urged him to create and to write, and the success that eventually came with his writing, changed him into quite a different man, difficult to live with and difficult to understand, as are all true artists.

He came gradually to realize, he told me, that his wife could not change with him, nor adjust herself to the altered conditions of their affairs. And so he finally realized that he must either give up his work or give up his wife. The urge to write was so strong—it had, indeed, become his very life—that he could not give it up. "It was as though I was on fire, Harry," he said to me once. He chose his work.

When it was all over, and the tragic break had been made, Jack fell for a time into the very depths of despair. Through this period of vexation of spirit, many of his friends deserted him, he said. But one person, a young woman by the name of Charmian Kittredge, stood staunchly by his side. And after a time he came to find in her what he had missed in his former wife—a love and a depth of understanding that could fill all his needs. Here was a woman, he believed,

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

who would be co-author with him in his writing; who would put up with his many idiosyncrasies and temperamental outbursts without rebuke or complaint; who would play with him when he felt like playing and go anywhere in the world with him at his word. Here was a woman who would never be jealous of his true love, writing, and who would be loyal to him, he felt confident, to the end of her days.

I think that it was the particular attribute of loyalty in Charmian that claimed Jack most of all. Loyalty seems to be a rare virtue in men; it appears to be a much rarer one in women. Charmian was loyal to Jack London from the moment she met him to the day he died. In comparison with that loyalty, any little feminine defects she may have had—and who, one might ask, hasn't any?—and that may have been told against her, are to my mind as nothing at all. I suggest that any woman who has the rare gift of loyalty to the extent that Charmian had it for Jack, is worthy of a very high place indeed in anyone's regard.

There has been much discussion, also, as to the influence Jack had on Charmian. Some have claimed that Jack overwhelmed her and that she was little more than a figurehead in his home. Some have even gone so far as to say that she only stayed with him from vanity at being a celebrity's wife.

For my part I know that these things are not true. I believe that Charmian loved Jack as man is seldom loved by woman, and I believe that Jack loved her in equal measure in return. Over and over again Jack

## THE JACK LONDONS AT HOME

would tell me what a perfect mate he had found in Charmian; how helpful had been her inspiration to him in his work; how valuable her criticism, how encouraging her praise.

"I wouldn't have written half the books I have done if it hadn't been for Charmian," I once heard him say, "and even if I *had* written them, without her they'd have been poor stuff."

The truth was, as I saw it—and I saw the Londons together intimately in their own home at Glen Ellen, and in their home in Hawaii on their various visits, almost daily for months on end—that Charmian realized quite well that she had a genius to contend with, and that she regarded Jack London, not only as her husband and mate, but also as her little boy, who could be petulant and wayward, and was often very difficult to get along with when he was in the throes of creative work, but who needed to be carefully and gently steered along the road of right living, so that the great work of novel writing, to which he had indentured himself, might be carried on with the least expenditure of energy and with the least harm to himself.

\* \* \* \*

Visitors of all kinds were always welcome at the Jack London Ranch. They had the free run of the place during the day. They could ride the fine horses, swim in the artificial lake, go picnicking in the mountains, in fact, amuse themselves in any way they pleased. There was, however, one obligation laid on every guest.

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

He must attend dinner with his host and hostess and be willing to take part in any conversation that took place.

It was around the dinner table that one actually saw Jack London's "literary factory" at work.

Although, in Hawaii, I had already had some experience of the wide range of Jack London's mind, I was astonished now to find into what diverse fields it could go, and how it could hold its own with any expert present. At his table, for instance, I heard discussed such widely-differing subjects as sculpture, painting, the drama, poetry, the great statues of Easter Island, Egyptian hieroglyphics, the origin of the Polynesian race, the head hunters of New Guinea, the Franco-Prussian War, the origin of and possible cure for wars, the social inequalities in Great Britain, the relative merits of the wines of Burgundy, the Moselle and the Rhine, gold-mining and prospecting, and, most particular favourite of all so far as Jack himself was concerned, the form of scientific agriculture on which he was then engaged. Jack was particularly proud, I remember, of the new pig pen, or "Pig Palace", as he called it, which he had recently erected on his ranch, and in which everything was arranged in such sanitary fashion that the space where the pigs fed could be washed down by one man in a few minutes. He was proud, too, of the big swimming pool he had made by building a dam across a stream, and his whole face would light up with fervour when he spoke of the soil, worn out by years of grape-vine plantings, that

## THE JACK LONDONS AT HOME

he hoped to restore to fertility by means of a system of crop rotations. He was much prouder of these things, I thought, that he had created with his hands, than he was of the books he had created with his mind.

All these subjects, and many others, I heard discussed with acknowledged authorities. But Jack dominated them all. His mind worked like a flash of lightning. He seemed to know SO much. It took a heavy toll from him, however. I remember hearing him say once, with weary resignation, that the price one paid for knowledge was the wearing out of the mind by the unremitting study necessary to acquire it.

"That's why," he went on, "there aren't many real thinkers in this world. Thinking is hard work. And hard work is difficult and so is never fashionable."

I was very much interested in his methods of writing. How did his ideas come to him, I wanted to know? How did he work them out?

He told me that each author no doubt had his particular methods. His own were simple enough.

"I try not to write about anything I do not know intimately, or that I have not actually experienced," he said. "I see my characters here, there and everywhere. They are not hard to make come alive. The important thing in writing, however, is to be able to get down clearly on paper what you see in your mind's eye and what you mean. For instance, the author conceives a certain picture in his mind. The whole art of authorship is to convey that picture to the reader's mind with the least possible change."

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The only medium existing between the writer and the reader, he went on to explain, is the written word. Twenty-six letters of the alphabet, arranged in different ways! The writer must arrange those letters into words, and the words into sentences, in such a fashion that when read the words would be translated into clear pictures in the reader's mind. Even the simplest pictures were bound to lose something of their clearness in the process, he felt, and the more complicated the picture, the greater, usually, the loss.

Jack felt very strongly about the picturizing principle in writing. So much so, indeed, that he used to say that when moving pictures were properly developed, he felt sure that authorship would decline, since instead of reading books for entertainment, people would go, he believed, to the moving picture theatres for that purpose.

Making a clear picture was not enough, however, Jack London went on to say. It might be enough to amuse people, if the intention were merely to amuse. Most authors, however, wanted to do more than amuse. They wanted to write something that would *live*. To make writing really live, one must have an idea that was full of *power*. Then that power, by some magic of the writer's art, must be put into such words that the reader would be moved, not only intellectually by the picture he envisioned, but also *emotionally* by the underlying power of the idea.

Jack was an indefatigable worker. He wrote regularly every day, usually during the morning hours. On

## THE JACK LONDONS AT HOME

his work table his Japanese servant would set a tray, with sides about an inch and a half high. In this tray would be placed a number of sheets of letter-size paper, some freshly-cleaned and newly-filled ink pencils, which Jack said were his favourite tools with which to write, and a number of scribbling pads of various sizes—long ones and short ones—on which he made what he called his “weaving notes”. That is, on these pads he would weave his characters and incidents in and out of the story on which he was at work.

Jack London loved writing for its own sake. But he soon discovered, he told me, that it involved something that brought him little happiness or joy. Since writing was his sole means of livelihood, there was the urgent necessity, not only of writing so many words a day, every day of the year, but also of *selling* those words at a good price, in order that his many dependents might be taken care of adequately.

He set himself the task of producing a thousand words of creative writing a day. But you couldn’t, Jack told me, write a thousand words of *good* stuff every day of your life!

I asked him once: “If time didn’t mean anything to you, Jack, how many words a day would you write?”

“Perhaps a hundred,” Jack replied. “And then next day I’d probably cut out fifty of them. I’m trying, however, to write one good book in three—a book I shall be really proud of and that I hope will live.”

Whether any of Jack London’s books *will* live or not, I do not know. But there is one thing I do know,



#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

and that I should have liked to have told him about had he been alive when I returned to San Francisco after the Great War. And that was that the biggest demand in reading matter among the British soldiers in France was for "Jack London books". His stories were full of wholesome, red-blooded adventure, such as appealed to the average normal man. They brought happiness and enjoyment, and that most precious thing of all—temporary forgetfulness—to untold numbers of men, often sitting in their wet clothes in damp dug-outs, reading by the light of a candle while they waited, through long, dreary hours, to "go over the top"; or perhaps when lying wounded on cots in hospitals, seeking surcease from pain.

What greater reward can any author ask than that?

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### The Scuttling of the *Geier*

THERE was considerable excitement in Honolulu, particularly among the British people there, when the Great War broke out in 1914.

As did most Englishmen who lived in distant parts of the world, on the day that War was declared I cabled the offer of my services to Lord Kitchener in London. I received the following reply:

“Not yet. But hold yourself in readiness.”

Things went on pretty much as usual in Honolulu until October, when we were greatly concerned to hear that a German gunboat, the *Geier*, which curiously enough was part of the command of Admiral Von Spee, was loose in the Pacific as a raider and had already destroyed a number of British merchant ships. (The episode of the inglorious end of the pocket-battleship, the *Admiral Graf Spee*, which happened in December, 1939, brings the incident of the *Geier* very clearly to my mind.)

Suddenly, on the morning of November 1st, 1914, the *Geier* steamed into Honolulu Harbour, and members of the German Colony in Honolulu went down *en masse* to meet it. They told the British people, with great glee, that the *Geier* had put into port in order to trap the large Canadian-Australian passenger liner, the *Niagara* — she was sunk by a mine near New

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Zealand in this present War—that was due to dock in Honolulu the following morning.

During the day, however, a wireless message was received in Honolulu, relayed through the American Naval authorities, to the effect that the *Niagara* had been delayed and would not arrive for two more days.

Now a most interesting situation developed.

According to International Law, the *Geier* could only stay in port for twenty-four hours. If she put out to sea, and waited outside the harbour for the *Niagara* to arrive, the *Geier* would never catch that liner, because the *Niagara* was a much faster ship. The *Geier's* only chance of catching the *Niagara* therefore, was to stay in harbour until the British ship arrived and had slowed down outside the three-mile limit, preparatory to entering the harbour, and then to speed out and attack the *Niagara* in a sudden surprise rush.

What was the *Geier* to do? German ingenuity proved equal to the occasion. It was suddenly discovered that a small breakdown had occurred to an important part of the *Geier's* steering gear, which made it impossible to steer her. Her Captain demanded that, in accordance with International Law, she be permitted a reasonable time in port to effect repairs, which he estimated would only take two days.

The delay was granted.

It is difficult to describe the extreme state of tension that existed in Honolulu between the British and the German residents during the two days that the *Geier* was in port. The British claimed that the action of the

#### THE SCUTTling OF THE GEIER

American Naval authorities, in granting the *Geier* an extension of time in port "for repairs" was entirely unfair, since it was strongly suspected that some "monkey business" had been going on with the *Geier's* steering gear in order to cause the delay. The Germans reported that this was War, and even if such suspicions were well founded, that ruses of this kind were quite justifiable in the circumstances.

Finally the British Consul, supported by a number of prominent British residents, made a special appeal to the U. S. Naval Port Commander. The Commander, however, said that he was unable to change the official decision that had been made.

Next, the German Commander of the *Geier* requested that the American Naval Port Commander in Honolulu give an assurance that no wireless messages would be sent out through the Naval Wireless Station—there was no other on the Islands at that time—to the *Niagara*, warning her that the *Geier* was waiting to attack her. The German Commander insisted that this also was in accordance with International Law, and one can well imagine how mortified the British were to learn that this request, too, had been granted by the American authorities.

Now the British were crestfallen indeed. They were condemned, they believed, to have to wait patiently, without being able to do anything to prevent it, while a great British liner fell unsuspectingly into the hands of a small German gunboat, right before their very eyes.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

What *could* be done? All the British people in Honolulu met together and discussed the situation at length. Suddenly one of them, a man who happened to have considerable business dealings with Japanese grocery firms in Honolulu, said he had an idea.

"Leave things to me," he said mysteriously, "and I think perhaps I know a way of getting word to the *Niagara* of her danger."

We heard no more from this man but a day later word came that the *Niagara* would make harbour the following morning, shortly after daybreak. Curiously enough, it was also reported that the *Geier's* repairs were almost completed and that she would be able to leave Honolulu just about the same time.

That night the whole German Colony in Honolulu held a great celebration for the officers and crew of the *Geier*, and it was said that more champagne and Rhine wine was drunk that night than had ever been consumed in a similar time before in the whole history of Hawaii!

The British arranged to meet before daylight on the top of the Von Hamm Young Hotel, from where they would have a good view of the harbour and its approaches.

Daylight dawned. Smoke arose from the funnels of the *Geier* and there were signs of intense activity aboard. Bunting was run up from forepeak to stern and two German flags were flown from its masts.

We were all eagerly watching seaward for a sign of the *Niagara*, hoping against hope that she would dodge

#### THE SCUTTLING OF THE GEIER

her usual call at the Islands and so escape her almost inevitable fate. We were doomed to disappointment, however, for presently a plume of smoke appeared on the far horizon, and gradually the masts and funnels, and then the whole dim outline of the *Niagara* appeared, as she slowly steamed towards Honolulu Harbour.

Now the *Geier* cast off her cables. The band paraded on her decks and began playing German martial and national airs. The whole German Colony of Honolulu, it seemed, was assembled on the wharf, waving goodbye and singing and cheering as the *Geier* steamed out, intent on capturing this easy prey that apparently knew nothing of the German gunboat's plans.

The *Geier* passed through the harbour and soon was within a few miles of the *Niagara* out at sea. Suddenly, from behind the *Niagara* there appeared a warship, coming at full speed, and from the peak of her mast could be seen flying the Japanese flag. It was, we learned later, the Japanese cruiser, the *Asama*.

As soon as the Japanese cruiser was discerned by the *Geier*, the German gunboat abruptly stopped short, made a quick turn about, and then came steaming back at full speed into Honolulu Harbour!

The Japanese cruiser stayed outside the three-mile limit, while the *Niagara*, without slackening speed, just quietly came in and moored at her usual berth in the same basin as the *Geier*; indeed, the sides of the two vessels were not more than a few feet apart.

The *Geier* was now in a very difficult position indeed.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

According to International Law, she really should be instantly interned. But her Commander found a way out of that. He stated that when he had gone out after the *Niagara* he had neglected to take on sufficient stores and water for a long voyage. He asked for a few more hours to provision his ship; then, he assured the authorities, he would leave with flags flying, and for the honour of the German Navy and the great German Empire he would do his best to attack the much larger Japanese ship that was still waiting outside. Who knew, he remarked, what a lucky torpedo might not do?

The permission for further delay was granted and the *Geier* was given until noon the next day.

Now it was the turn of the British to be jubilant and for the Germans in Honolulu to be dejected. However, the Germans said that the British would now see how bravely Germans could fight, and, if necessary, die. The officers and men of the *Geier*, it was learned, that night made their wills and deposited them with German friends in Honolulu for safe keeping. Last messages home were hastily written and despatched.

Morning came, and by this time some of the British were beginning to feel that after all it was hardly sportsmanlike to send such a small vessel as the *Geier* to almost certain death. A Committee of the British was therefore appointed to try to persuade the Germans that their honour would not be stained if, in the circumstances the *Geier* were to permit itself to be interned.

This suggestion was met with a most indignant

## THE SCUTTLING OF THE GEIER

refusal. No, said the Germans, that would not accord with the spirit of the German Navy. Out to sea the *Geier* will go, and it will engage the enemy, no matter how strong she may be!

Once again the citizens of Honolulu lined the rooftops, armed with telescopes and field glasses, to watch what was about to occur.

The Japanese cruiser was by this time some seven or eight miles off shore, slowly steaming up and down.

Suddenly, just before noon, smoke again rose in volumes from the *Geier's* funnels. Flags were hoisted at her masts and the band began to play on deck.

The German population in Honolulu cheered to the echo as the *Geier* steamed out, and the cheers of the Germans were augmented by those of the Americans and the British, who could only feel admiration for this heroic act.

Out the *Geier* went, just as she had done the day before. She passed through the harbour and came to the three mile limit. Then the Japanese cruiser slowly stopped, just opposite the entrance to the harbour, swung broadside on and trained her guns on the approaching German gunboat.

The *Geier* halted. She seemed to hesitate for a moment or two. Then she turned. Slowly but steadily she made her way back into port and tied up at the same wharf she had so recently left.

The German crowd dispersed silently, and many a Britisher sought out his German friend, to comfort and console him in his hour of humiliation.



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

I think that perhaps the most depressed German of all in Honolulu at that time was my good friend, Captain Berger, leader of the Royal Hawaiian Band.

"Harry Strange," he said to me, "what you have seen in action, or rather, in inaction, has been the German *Navy*. Had the German Army of my day been in Honolulu Harbour, they would have gone out and attacked that Japanese cruiser in rowboats! But our Navy, you know, is a very new force. It has not yet acquired the fine traditions of the Army!"

Soon an American Naval force appeared and the crew of the *Geier* was marched away and officially interned. The breech blocks were taken from the *Geier's* guns, her torpedoes and ammunition were removed, and a small portion of the German crew was left on board as caretakers. The crew were allowed perfect freedom to come and go as they pleased, having given their word of honour to the authorities that they would not attempt to escape.

A short time later, however, the same trick was played by the crew of the *Geier* as was played by the crew of the *Admiral Graf Spee*. The *Geier* was scuttled and set on fire at the dock, almost burning down the whole wharf in the process—a fine reward indeed to their American hosts who had stretched regulations to the limit in order to help them in their hour of need!

But how did the Japanese cruiser happen to meet with and support the *Niagara* at that particular time?

Well, when it was all over, our quiet English friend, who had suggested that he might be able to help,

#### THE SCUTTLING OF THE GEIER

handed us a copy of a cablegram that had been sent to a large firm of wholesale food merchants in Tokio by a Japanese merchant in Honolulu.

It read somewhat as follows:

"Extremely unlikely my shipment goods can sail to Vancouver this week on English ship as scheduled. Forward at once this port by first Japanese ship supplies of Rhine wine, sauerkraut and Strassburg liver paste urgently needed to supply ship's mess officers twelve crew one hundred."

This telegram about groceries had passed the cable censor and, of course, the Japanese authorities at Tokio had immediately surmised that something was wrong, and had no doubt sent a wireless message out over the Pacific to the nearest Japanese cruiser to make full speed for Honolulu at once and find out what it was.

Thus the *Niagara* had been saved.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### Off to the Great War

**D**URING the period that elapsed before I received word to proceed to England, to join the fighting forces of my own land, I saw considerably more of my friends, the Jack Londons.

Jack London was greatly distressed over the idea of War. His sympathies were all with England and he would, I am sure, have gone over eventually as a soldier (and not as a correspondent) had he lived. Meanwhile he sought surcease from his many worries and improvement to his failing health by frequent visits to the place which he now looked upon as his second home—Hawaii.

Jack was, by this time, at the very height of his fame. He had become a real "lion" and he seemed to delight in his popularity like an ingenuous small boy.

Alexander Hume Ford and I went out with a few others in a launch to meet Jack's steamer as it came into Honolulu Harbour on the occasion of his second visit. As we stepped aboard, a lady, one of the leaders of a Woman's Club in Honolulu pushed past us and rushed up to Jack.

"Oh, Mr. London," she gushed excitedly, "I'm so happy to welcome you to Hawaii. I want you to talk to our Club. All the members are such admirers of your books. I simply adore them myself."



CHARMIAN AND JACK LONDON AS HARRY  
STRANGE KNEW THEM



A MEETING OF THE SPRUCE CREEK MINER'S ADJUSTMENT COM-  
MITTEE. HARRY STRANGE IS IN THE CENTRE AS CHAIRMAN



OFF TO THE GREAT WAR

Jack London smiled. "Thank you, madam," he said. "And which one, might I inquire, do you like best?"

The lady flushed, but after a moment replied:

"I believe I loved *Treasure Island* best of all!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack London, with an impish grin, "I like that book myself. How I wish I had written it!"

On this particular visit the Londons had with them Charmian's pretty cousin, Beth Wiley, and very soon they had a happy group of friends congregating at their home almost every night. My mother, who had arrived in Hawaii since Jack's previous visit, became an intimate friend of both Jack and Charmian, and "mothered" them both for all she was worth. Jack used to call my mother his "Aunt Emma", and he took an almost fiendish delight in inventing amazing stories, that were designed to "pull Aunt Emma's leg" and that used to leave her gasping with shocked astonishment.

Among the group that regularly foregathered at that time I recall the names of Brigadier-General Samuel I. Johnson—in charge of the National Guard—and his lovely wife, Pearl; Mr. Kopke, engineer at the local Ironworks; Lorrin A. Thurston, who owned the *Honolulu Advertiser*; Jack Atkinson, then Secretary of the Territory of Hawaii, and, of course, Alexander Hume Ford.

Many happy parties were held at the various homes. I remember one at our own house, at which a very dignified lady from San Francisco happened to be present. After dinner was over, Charmian selected

some records of classical music and played them for us on the phonograph. Jack, as was his wont, collected some cushions and lay down full length on the floor.

When the visitor from San Francisco saw this, she exclaimed:

"Whoever would have thought of seeing such a distinguished person as Jack London lying on the floor!"

Jack was most amused at this remark and replied:

"If you are shocked at seeing me lying here, madam, I wonder what you'd have thought of some of the places I've lain in in my life."

On another occasion we included among our dinner guests our neighbours, the Iaukeas, of whom I have already spoken. Through Colonel Iaukea's influence, it was arranged that the Londons should receive a private audience with Queen Liliuokalani at Washington Palace. Both the Londons thoroughly enjoyed their informal chat with the Queen, who, towards the end of her life, seemed to soften a little towards her American conquerors and to treat them with more friendliness than before.

Jack London was never one for ostentation, nor for following the conventions. He liked above all things to be comfortable, and to make his friends comfortable when he was their host. He enjoyed being with natural, friendly people, where he could relax completely. There is one episode that occurred during this particular visit of Jack's to Honolulu that illustrates this trait of his very clearly.

It took place at the famous Annual Ball, given by the

Governor of the Islands. Jack and Charmian, that year, were to be specially-honoured guests.

It was arranged that my mother and I and the Londons should all go to the Ball together. When we arrived, Charmian and my mother went in, while Jack and I were delayed for a few minutes outside. I was dressed in formal evening clothes, but Jack, who never wore evening dress, had on white flannel trousers, a white silk shirt, a black coat and a flowing black tie.

When it came our turn to enter, the elaborately-apparelled doorman looked at Jack most superciliously and said:

"I'm sorry, sir, but only *gentlemen* are admitted to the Governor's Ball!"

Jack laughed heartily and I said quickly:

"Wait here a minute, Jack, I'll go inside and fix things up."

"No," said Jack firmly, "I've had enough. I'm going home."

"All right," I returned, "I'll go with you."

And back to Jack London's house we both went. Jack picked up a book and began to read aloud and we were both quietly enjoying ourselves when there came a loud blowing of horns outside, and a gentleman of the Governor's retinue appeared at the door.

He came with the most humble apologies for the doorman's rudeness, he said, and would Mr. London *please* save a most difficult situation for the Governor by returning to the Ball with him right away?

"Of course I will," Jack said, good-naturedly. "And



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

please don't blame the poor doorman. It was really my fault."

We returned to the Ball and had a most enjoyable evening. After it was all over, we went to the Londons with the Governor and some other friends and sat swapping yarns and stories until dawn.

\* \* \* \*

Jack London's last visit to Hawaii came just before I left to go to the Great War. Before leaving the mainland he had written to me, asking me to find a house for him as near as possible to the sea. I turned the assignment over to my mother, and she soon found an attractive cottage on Waikiki Beach. My mother had the house furnished and everything arranged for the Londons by the time they arrived.

I was startled to notice a great change in Jack. He seemed to be quite ill. He tired easily and the high spirits that had always characterized him seemed to have completely disappeared. He did not swim or surfboard, or take long walks on the beach, as he had been in the habit of doing when he was in Honolulu before. Instead, dressed in a faded, blue-flowered kimona, he would lie for long hours in a hammock, or on the sand, reading and thinking, and more often than not, sleeping. He liked to read aloud to us, I remember, and he seemed to be particularly fond of the Book of Ecclesiastes, the wisdom of which he profoundly admired. In sharp contrast to this, however, he would also read to us

any humorous stories that appeared in the national magazines as they came along.

He played poker a good deal, too; smoked incessantly and drank far more than was good for him, I thought, in his poor condition of health. I have heard Jack London referred to as a dipsomaniac, but from what I saw of him then, and during all the time I knew him, I would say that he was a moderate drinker only; he certainly did not drink anything like as much as many of the men with whom he associated in Honolulu at that time.

Just then the word came for me to go to the War, and so I hastily arranged with my directors for leave of absence from the Gas Company for the duration, and made preparations to depart.

Jack was very excited when I told him I was leaving. He threw his arms around me and kissed me on both cheeks.

"How I wish I could go with you, Harry," he said. "Don't worry about your mother and the children. I'll look after them until you return." (It was not until years later that I learned of his wonderful generosity to my mother and to my three small sons—a generosity I was never able, alas, to thank him for or to repay.)

Jack knew that he could go over as a war correspondent. But he did not want to go that way.

"Correspondents in this war," he said to me on parting, "are being wet-nursed. They can't get near the front. I'd want to accept the same dangers as the

soldiers, and really be in the thick of things. If you can possibly work me in somewhere over there, Harry, send me a cable and I'll be right along."

"I'll do that," I promised. It was a promise I kept somewhat belatedly, but unfortunately it was too late for Jack.

I left Honolulu at about two o'clock in the morning, curiously enough on the *Niagara*, the same ship that had figured in the incident of the *Geier* a short time before. Everything was quiet and silent. There were none of the usual goodbye celebrations. It felt, indeed, as though one were stealing away—and I think that that was exactly what we were doing, for there was still some fear of German raiders in the Pacific, and every precaution had to be taken against surprise attacks.

Among the many friends who came down to see me off was a young German, whom I will call Otto Schwartz. He was the manager of a local store and he had been an officer in the Hawaiian National Guard. He was also, he explained to me in confidence, a reserve officer of the German Army and he had received orders to return to Germany as soon as possible.

"So," he said to me with a wry smile as we parted, "it is likely that we shall meet again!"

We agreed that if either of us were taken prisoner that we would attempt to communicate with each other, and each promised the other to try and soften the lot of the captured one if it should become necessary. We parted the best of friends, to become at once the

best of enemies. (I did meet Otto Schwartz again. It was in somewhat sad circumstances that I shall presently relate.)

As the ship moved away from the wharf, I said my final goodbye to my friends and to Hawaii. I murmured the old Hawaiian expression of farewell: "*Hele ana no wau, boi hou mai,*" which means, "I am going away now, but I'll come back again some day!" But in my heart I wondered!

I arrived in Vancouver safely and there a really astounding coincidence occurred.

It will be recalled that it was now many years since I had said goodbye to my good friends in the Klondike.

I had not heard a word of any of them since, but as I was walking up and down Vancouver Station, waiting for my train to leave, I noticed several men in Canadian Army uniforms strolling about, one of whom looked at me intently every time he passed. Suddenly he stopped and grabbed me by the arm:

"Yes, it *is* Harry Strange!" he exclaimed.

It was my old friend, Charlie Straker. He was leaving that night on a troop train, he told me. I might have known he would join up and get into the fray!

We had fifteen minutes of excited conversation and then my own train left. We exchanged addresses and promised to try and see each other in France. I did meet Charlie Straker again over there, once in happy and once in tragic circumstances on the battlefield.

I had an uneventful and swift trip across Canada to Montreal. There I decided that I could get a quicker

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

ship to Europe if I went by way of New York. So down to New York I travelled, staying there for a day or so with a cousin of mine, and then boarding a ship en route to England from that point.

\* \* \* \*

Our ship arrived at Liverpool without incident, and in a few hours I was in London.

The very next morning after my arrival, I called at the War Office and was at once escorted to the room of a Colonel who was in charge of the Department of Secret Operations.

"I understand that you are familiar with the use of crude oil," he said to me, after introductions had taken place and I had presented my credentials.

"Yes," I replied, "I'm familiar with oil, flame and gas."

"Why, those are the very things we're working with at the moment," he exclaimed. "We hardly thought we'd come across a man who was familiar with all three."

I told him of my experience.

"Well," he remarked, when I had finished, "you'll now be working with lethal gas instead of with the harmless lighting and heating gas to which you've formerly been used!"

"If you'd have heard the complaints of some of our customers, sir," I told him, "you'd have thought I'd been making and distributing lethal gas for years in Honolulu!"

## OFF TO THE GREAT WAR

A few moments later I was being examined by a doctor, and then I was told by the Colonel that I would be commissioned in the Royal Engineers. He directed me to another office, where he said I could secure a list of the things I would need.

"Of course," he explained, "it will take some time for your uniforms to be made. But if you'll report tomorrow morning in civilian clothes to the unit you will join—Special Sections, Royal Engineers—you will, I believe, be making a record for speed in obtaining a commission as a lieutenant in His Majesty's forces!"

The following morning I reported to a Captain Livens, the officer in charge of the Special Sections. This was a small secret unit stationed at a certain place on the outskirts of London.

The clothes I wore were obviously American, from my black slouch hat to the cut of my suit, and as I was being introduced to my fellow-officers in the mess, I overheard one of them say:

"Looks like a damned Yank to me!"

Before noon I was working with them on the flame projectors that were there being designed and improved, and with which the men were being trained.

It was quite familiar work to me, for the flame projectors were nothing more than crude oil burners, such as I had been used to for many years, excepting that they were discharged from compressed air tanks. One of them could be carried by two men, and each contained about one hundred pounds of oil under heavy pressure that could be pumped up. This was discharged

through a nozzle in the form of a burning stream of fire, lasting for about half a minute, and having a range of from thirty to forty yards.

In a few days our camp was moved to a nobleman's estate. There we were very private indeed, and we proceeded at once to make experiments with a much larger flame projector, designed to be installed in a tunnel under the ground. The discharge end of it would be within forty or fifty yards of the German trenches, and it would throw a jet of flame some thirty feet wide, forty feet high and a hundred yards long. It looked like a veritable slice of hell coming at a man.

During our work on this machine, Captain Livens, who had designed it, was kind enough to say that my knowledge of oil and flame had assisted him in making the machine more effective.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### First Engagement

AT LAST the great day came that we were ordered overseas. An important battle was coming off soon, we heard, and it was to be opened by three of our flame projectors firing at the enemy trenches.

Our material was all carefully packed, and away we went to an English seaport. We embarked on transports and had a rough passage to France. We were happy to see, however, how effective were the safeguards against submarines. It seemed impossible that any submarines could get near enough to loose a torpedo. We crossed the Channel without trouble of any kind.

On arrival at the French port, we found everything in readiness to transport us to the battlefield. There were luxurious cars for the officers—Rolls Royce and Napier machines—motor cycles for some of the N.C. O.s, as well as trucks, or lorries, as the British called them, to convey all the men and the whole of our machinery and equipment up to the line.

We were given maps and a guide and were told to make our way to a certain *rendezvous* behind the battle lines. We started off at night and it took us, I remember, two nights and one day of solid driving across France to reach our destination.

The officer who guided our little force from our



landing port to our base was a mine of interesting information about the history of the French towns and villages and the country-side through which we passed. He told us that the French port at which we had landed was the very spot where King Henry the Fifth's Army had disembarked for the Battle of Agincourt. He said that to arrive at our base we should have to travel along the very road the English troops had used on that historic occasion and that our base was at about the same place at which the English forces had rested before Agincourt.

"If you will keep your ears open, and listen to the conversation of some of the 'Tommies,' he told us, "you won't find it hard to imagine that some of King Henry the Fifth's men-at-arms have come to life again!"

When we arrived at our base, we found that an advance officer had secured for us quite comfortable billets in a sleepy little French village.

Our officers' mess was next to the residence of the *curé*, and many a pleasant hour I spent with this quiet old scholar, strolling up and down with him in his old-world flower garden, reviving memories of my school-days in France. It seemed as though the war was a million miles away, and yet all the time we were talking together there was the intermittent rumbling of guns to be heard not very far off.

The day after our arrival, Captain Livens and several more of us drove in a car to report to the Division on whose front our work was to be done. We were also

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT

to inspect the tunnels which had already been dug for us by the Welsh Tunnelling Companies and which were to contain our flame projectors.

We had evidently been well heralded, for the Staff Officers we met were all consumed with curiosity concerning this extraordinary new secret weapon that we were to use.

I think I shall never forget the thrill I had when suddenly we came to the top of a hill and saw in front of us, extending as far as the eye could see in every direction, the battle lines.

"Just think," Captain Livens remarked, as we paused on the summit, "here we have a free box seat for one of the greatest 'shows' the earth has ever seen, or perhaps ever will see. Take a good look at it!"

The lines were perhaps three miles away, but the two front lines and no-man's-land between them could easily be distinguished. On each side was a row of observation balloons, seemingly only a short distance apart. I remember that we counted twenty-eight British balloons and twenty-five German.

Nowhere was there a human being to be seen, and for a time there seemed to be no signs of life. Then suddenly, up in the sky, almost directly above no-man's-land, there appeared a few quiet, lazy puffs of white smoke. Then we could see a speck, that turned out to be an aeroplane, manoeuvring around. All at once it turned and went back to the German lines. It was evidently a German plane that had been driven off by the British. Further along the line, similar puffs of smoke

appeared, but these were black. They were German shells, we were told, being fired at our Allied planes.

It was a "quiet" day on that particular sector of the battle front, we learned, but the noise of the guns, firing over an area of from ten to twelve miles wide, seemed to me to be appallingly loud.

Soon we arrived at the Divisional Headquarters. Here we were met by a guide, who led us up a long communication trench. At the entrance to this trench was a conspicuous sign: "Forward of this point, all troops will proceed in the trenches."

The guide warned us to keep our heads down, for we could easily be spotted, he said, from the German observation balloons. As is usual with new soldiers, we were most careful to obey. Unfortunately, experience made a man careless, and many a life was lost through soldiers failing to carry out this simple precaution.

At one spot I ventured to look over the top. I was surprised to see, apparently in full sight of the enemy, an old man and two old women busily cutting grass and gathering it up into sheets. They waved to me, and the old man shouted, somewhat derisively: "*Les soldats dans les tranches, les civils dans les champs!*" ("The soldiers in the trenches, the civilians in the fields!")

Soon we came to the entrance to a tunnel. Down we went, to find it occupied by members of a Welsh Tunnelling Company. These Welsh miners were a remarkable group of men. They performed a marvellous service in the war which went on under the ground, quite

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT

oblivious, and sometimes quite regardless, of the war going on above ground.

We were introduced to a Lieutenant Jones, a typical, small-statured, dark-haired Welshman, with sparkling blue eyes and a strong Welsh accent. He was as proud of his tunnels as a mother of her offspring.

"The tunnels are finished," he told us proudly, "and finished on time. They lead from the main entrance in the support lines right under the front line, and from thence under no-man's-land to within twenty yards of the German front line trench.

"I only hope," the Welsh officer said, "that Jerry is not counter-mining underneath you. That happens sometimes, you know. However, we'll have our men constantly on the alert with their listening apparatus, and if we find he's getting too close, we'll give you fair warning."

This was a complication we had not expected at all.

We had ten days, it appeared, in which to get our material up to the tunnels, and our guns ready for "the show". "Zero" had been set, but we were warned that we had better lose no time, because "zeros" were sometimes advanced a day or so in order to deceive the enemy.

This, in fact, is what actually happened that time.

Our base camp, with all our material assembled, was several miles behind the front line. The material could be taken up in horse artillery half-limbers to within about one mile of the front line, and from thence it had to be carried piece by piece up muddy, tortuous

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

communication trenches until the entrances to our own tunnels were reached.

It was calculated that we had three thousand man-loads for the two flame projectors.

We were told that it would only be practicable for the men to make two trips each during the night, and that therefore several hundred men—which number would include sufficient to allow for casualties—would be available to us when required.

We divided the material up into small man-loads, to make it as easy as possible for the infantry who were to do the carrying. But at the very last moment, when the company of infantry who were to do the work should have reported, a message came through that that particular brigade had been suddenly ordered to another part of the front! A relief of the Norfolks, however, would be coming down from the front line soon after dusk, and these men would be ordered to carry up our stuff.

The Norfolk lads came down, but it was quite apparent that they had just been through a very rough time. They had been in the front line for about two weeks and were looking forward to a little rest. They had had something of a "plastering" from the Boche coming down, too, and had lost a number of their men in killed and wounded on the way. The men were so tired, they were walking like automatons. It seemed to be a cruel thing to ask these men, considering the condition they were in, to carry our heavy loads back up the trenches.

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT

Finally, long after the hour when the carrying parties should have started, these unfortunate men were lined up and loaded. I had never in my life, up to that time, seen men forced to endure such a terrible journey. Even on a plain, open road, it would have been a difficult task. But in those narrow, muddy trenches, with their many twists and turns and unexpected obstructions here and there, it was horrible beyond description.

Half-way along the route, the Germans began to drop shells onto the carrying party, and I saw my first war casualty. It was one of our own Royal Engineers—a corporal. He was hit in the back with a piece of shrapnel from a shell that had burst high overhead. He screamed out in agony and dropped his load on another man's foot. The heavy load, by the way, broke the second man's big toe.

I thought that there would be some disorder, perhaps panic, but word was quietly passed along to "Keep moving! Keep moving!" A sergeant of the infantry close by ordered several of his men to drop their loads, pick up the wounded corporal, lift him up and throw him over the top of the trench on to the open land.

"But won't he be shot?" I asked, in some consternation.

"Maybe," the sergeant answered calmly, "but if he's left here in the trench, he'll be trodden to death and delay the whole party. We'll probably be able to pick him up when we come back."

The wounded corporal was by this time unconscious, and quite oblivious of what was occurring, and so over

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

the top he was dumped and on we went. It dawned on me then how ruthlessly efficient war must be. The individual must always be sacrificed to enhance the safety of the many!

(Afterwards, at Passchendaele, I was to see this sort of thing carried to shocking extremes. Often a man, loaded with a heavy pack, would slip into a deep crater shell-hole, filled with green, scummy liquid, and would slowly sink down and drown before one's very eyes. Not one of the heavily-laden men, walking gingerly along the narrow, slippery and insecure duckboards under constant machine gun and shell fire, would be able to lend a hand to their comrade pleading pitifully for help!)

On the particular occasion I have mentioned above, there were a few more casualties and many of the lads dropped out from sheer exhaustion. Not more than half of our loads reached the tunnels; the rest were distributed all along the trenches.

Later, the little Welsh officer in charge of the Tunnelling Company, had a happy idea.

"We'll help you ourselves," he suggested. And immediately he turned out his entire company, of over one hundred men, and these, with our own Royal Engineers, made trips back and forth all night long. We managed to recover the greater part of our machinery and equipment, that had been dropped along the way, and to bring up replacements from our base behind the lines.

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT

Our corporal was picked up, too, and he lived. But his war days were over.

We soon found out that it was one thing to assemble the guns in a dry tunnel of our own construction under peaceful conditions in England, and quite another to do the job in a muddy tunnel under no-man's-land and harassed by shell fire in France. Assembly operations that had seemed quite simple before, now became most complicated indeed, and to make matters worse, the Germans apparently became suspicious that something was going on where we were, for they began to pound away on no-man's-land right above our tunnels with heavy stuff. Finally they destroyed entirely one tunnel in which a projector had been placed, and caused many casualties. The Germans also shelled the front and support lines, so that for several days it was not possible to bring any rations up to us, and we had to live on what the Tunnelling Company could spare from their own supplies.

Then came the news that "zero" had been advanced two days. It would be "nip and tuck" with us now to be ready in time. The Welsh miners and our own men worked frantically day and night to repair the two tunnels that had not been destroyed and to erect two of our flame projectors in them. Nobody slept, washed or shaved. We had nothing hot to drink and very little to eat. This, I thought, was War with a vengeance!

Finally, at around two o'clock in the morning of the appointed day, everything was reported ready to fire. We had been told that "zero" was set for 4.10 a.m. We



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

tested and retested. Everything appeared to be in order.

Half-past three came. To give us all the strength we should need, we consumed our emergency rations.

Then along came a runner with a message. "Attack postponed!"

Fortunately we had not turned on the pressure into our machines. Now we had a little respite, but nobody knew for how long.

The Germans by this time had stopped firing, having learned, we heard afterwards, by means of their most efficient listening apparatus, the exact time of the change in our "zero hour".

Now at last there came up to us "dixies" full of hot tea and steaming meat and vegetable stew, with bread and butter and cheese. How good all those things tasted after our short rations of the last few days! We sat down and gorged ourselves and some of the men were actually ill from over-eating.

"Zero" was only postponed for two days, and soon we were again on tiptoe of expectation. By this time, however, we felt ourselves to be quite seasoned troops, and we were able to take things more calmly.

I watched with interest the assembling of the troops for the battle that was to take place. Little by little, all night long, soldiers came up and took their places in the front lines and in the support trenches. Soon numbers of ladders, about five feet high, were carried up, and these were set a few yards apart against the front wall or parapet of the trenches. By means of these, at

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT

"zero hour", the men could easily climb over the top.

It was the Norfolk Regiment that went over at our particular point, and I well remember thinking how quiet those lads were. Many of them were just young boys; they had their rifles with bayonets fixed, and they were either sitting down with their heads in their hands, trying to snatch a little sleep, or standing up leaning against the wall of the trench, conserving every ounce of energy. There was very little noise, and hardly any talking. With each squad of men there was a non-commissioned officer, and with each platoon a lieutenant. Here and there one would see a captain and occasionally a major.

Shortly before "zero hour" I called on the Battalion Headquarters, to acquaint the officers there with what they might expect to see when our flame projectors were discharged. Word had already been passed around among the soldiers who were "going over" of what was about to occur.

I found the Colonel commanding the Battalion in a very angry state. It appeared that he had been ordered to stay in his Advance Headquarters and he was not to be permitted to go "over the top" with his men. It was a damnable shame, he said, and he had half a mind to break orders and to go over anyway!

Finally his Second-in-Command calmed him down.

"You'll have a good view of it, sir," he reminded the irate Colonel. "And don't forget, we need a cool head behind here to direct things, if anything goes wrong!"

As the crucial hour approached, watches were syn-

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

chronized; the officers took a good drink of whiskey each—neat, I observed; the sergeants began serving out generous tots of rum to the troops, and each man downed his ration with a cough and a splutter.

I arrived back in our own tunnel about fifteen minutes before "zero hour". Now the pressure was turned on. We gathered our torches to light the oil. Our fuse lighters were all ready.

"Ten minutes more," I called out. Everyone was alert.

"Five minutes to go!" Pause. "Four minutes!" Pause. "Three minutes!" Pause. "Two!" Pause. "One!" Now the tension was intense. "Thirty seconds!" "Twenty seconds!" "Light the torches!" "Ten seconds! Raise the head!" The pressure was turned on and with a hiss the head went up out of the hole that had been dug for it in the top of the tunnel into no-man's-land. "Five seconds!" "Three seconds!" "Two!" "One!" "Fire!" I commanded.

The valve was turned, the blazing torches raised outside, and away went the enormous gulp of flame. The whole gun quivered for some forty seconds and then was still.

Our job was done, and done on time.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### After the Attack

FOLLOWING the discharge we had no idea, of course, what had happened. We could hear nothing down in the tunnel excepting the deep rumble of the artillery barrage, sounding like continuous low thunder.

Finally we lowered our projector head and then, after a short wait, another officer and I squeezed up through the hole left by the head and crept out on to no-man's-land.

Dawn was just breaking. In front of us we could see a great arc of burnt grass. It stretched across to the German front trench, now occupied by the lads of the Norfolk Regiment.

Between the German front line trench and the second German line, we could see men advancing quite slowly at a walk. (I had thought they would be running, as one often sees soldiers in films!) Their rifles were fitted with bayonets, but they were carrying them, not as I had expected—at the charge—but slung over their shoulders. Each man had a bomb in his hand, and here and there a bomb would be thrown. Now and again I saw a man fall. So far, not a single German shell had fallen on no-man's-land, but we could hear them whistling over our heads and falling in the rear on our own support lines.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Suddenly the line of advancing men seemed to waver. It turned about and then, without their rifles, men came running back towards where we were.

"Good God!" exclaimed my fellow officer, "our boys are running away!"

For a moment it looked as though they were. Then we discovered that it was not our men at all who were running towards us. It was German soldiers. With their hands above their heads they came running, shouting "*Kamerad! Kamerad!*"

Poor devils! As they streamed past us, we saw that they were mostly young boys. Many of them were wounded and all of them were terror-stricken. Here and there a man was being carried on the back of another, and several were helping the wounded along between them. Intermixed with the German soldiers was a trickle of our own wounded men.

Soon, as we began to see more clearly, we noticed, dotted across no-man's-land, the pathetic-looking huddled forms of our own dead soldiers, and others hanging on the German wire, looking from a distance like drab washing on a clothes line.

All at once, down came the German counter fire. It came right on to our own front line trench and on to no-man's-land. We just had time to drop back through our projector hole into our tunnel, but not before seeing numbers of the German prisoners and of our own wounded men being mowed down by the bursting shells.

I walked back in the tunnel to the front line trench,

## AFTER THE ATTACK

where I found soldiers running to and fro seeking shelter. Here I had my first real war experience of what this thing called humanity means. The German prisoners, especially the wounded ones, were being given every possible care in our dugouts. Our men gave them water, rum, part of their own food rations, and everything else that came to hand. Wounds were being carefully dressed and no difference whatever was being made between the wounded in khaki and the wounded in field grey.

In a few minutes the shelling shortened, and the Germans began to concentrate their artillery far away on to our advancing infantry. Meanwhile the German prisoners were herded together and taken in little groups back to the rear.

I was now joined by the officer who had been in charge of firing the other flame projector—a chap named Lieutenant Stewart.

“Let’s go over to the German front line and see what’s happened,” he suggested.

Together we ran across the burnt ground to the German front line trench and jumped in.

Where the flames had struck, about ten yards apart, were two German machine guns. The leather portions of the guns had been burned to a crisp. There were no gunners around nor any bodies to be seen.

We noticed that within the arc where the flame had struck, and for a considerable distance on either side, that there were no bodies at all. There should have been some burnt Germans, we thought.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

We walked along the German trench. Just around a bay we came upon a horrible sight. Here was a German machine-gun crew, some half a dozen men, and about a dozen or more infantrymen, huddled together, burnt to death. Their clothing and their boots had been burned clean off their bodies, and their equipment had been blasted by the fierce flame. The hair had been burnt from their faces and their heads, and their flesh looked like roast meat. The stench was sickening. We examined them carefully, to see if any were alive, but none were.

We next walked along no-man's-land parallel with the German front line trench to see what had taken place further on. Here we found that our own casualties had been high. The German wire had not been broken up anything like as well as we had expected it would be, and it was quite clear that after our own artillery barrage had lifted, and our men had started to "go over the top", that enemy machine guns had been brought up from dugouts, placed on the parapet, and used to destroy the advancing British soldiers.

The number of our men, dead and wounded, who were lying out just in front of the German trench, and who were caught on the German wire, was pitiful to see. The stretcher bearers were working feverishly, but their numbers were sadly few.

Lieutenant Stewart and I started to help them. We quickly used up our own field dressings and had to go back to our tunnels for more. Just as we reached the German front line again, however, the enemy once

#### AFTER THE ATTACK

more opened up fire on no-man's-land and his stuff began dropping all around us.

I have never seen a man, either before or since, who acted as calmly as Stewart did. He was quite cool and collected, as though made of steel. I know that every nerve in my own body was screaming at me to jump into the German trench and to take shelter, but Stewart went on working with the wounded as though nothing out of the way was occurring, and his example kept me going, and the others, too.

Suddenly the German shelling became more intense than ever.

"We can't dress any more out here," Stewart cried. "We'd better carry as many as we can into the trench."

We started carrying in those who were not too badly wounded. But it was a difficult job. We had to drag the poor fellows over the German wire and down into the trench. The groans and screams, as we inadvertently wrenched torn bodies and broken limbs, were heart-rending.

All at once the German shelling became so heavy that it was simply suicide to venture out any more. But Stewart kept on going out, and carrying in one man after another, and presently he carried in a Major of the Norfolks, who had been wounded in both feet and so could not walk.

"By Jove!" the Major exclaimed gratefully, "you fellows have done well! I shall certainly remember you for this!"



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

I now recognized him as the Second-in-Command of the Battalion I had visited a few hours before.

"So your Colonel went over with your men, after all!" I said.

"Did he?" the Major asked, in a surprised tone. "How d'you know?"

"He's out there dead in no-man's-land," I told him. (I had seen the Colonel there, a few minutes before, with the back of his head cut off by a piece of shrapnel.)

"Well! Well!" the wounded Major exclaimed. "The Colonel was a fine fellow. He just couldn't stand his men going over without him. That's the way he would have liked to die!"

This Norfolk Major gave an account later of the saving of his life by Lieutenant Stewart, and Stewart was recommended for the Victoria Cross. If anyone deserved it, he did. We were all very proud in our unit when we heard of the recommendation. But for some reason, Stewart did not get the V.C. Instead he was rewarded with the Military Cross. The sergeant with us received the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Soon the German firing stopped altogether, and the stretcher bearers again began their work of carrying off the wounded. It seemed fairly safe now to go out again, so Stewart and I thought we would stroll further on to see how far our troops had advanced.

Presently we came upon the original German support line. Here we found a little knot of our men gathered together close to the mouth of a German dugout. There were three wounded men on the floor of the

#### AFTER THE ATTACK

trench and the corporal who was with them was cursing profusely.

"There's some Germans in that dugout, sir," he said to me, "and they keep firing on us as we go by. They've wounded these three men already. We can't get 'em to come out."

"Throw some Mills bombs down," I suggested.

"We've tried that," the corporal answered. "But it's no use, sir. There's a big chamber down below and they take refuge in that."

Suddenly I had an idea.

"Stewart," I said, "take some men, go back to our tunnel and bring up some cans of oil."

"Right-o," said Stewart, with a gleam in his eye, and off he went with the corporal and a few men. Soon they were all back with a dozen two-gallon cans of light crude oil.

I tied a Mills bomb to the top of each can, slit the can down the side with a bayonet, so that the oil would run out freely, released the trigger of the Mills bomb, and threw the cans, with the Mills bombs attached, down the sloping steps into the dugout.

In a few seconds the bombs went off, set the oil on fire, and a fierce blaze shot up the steps. We could hear screams and shouts of "*Kamerad!*"

In a moment or two, up through the flames came a dozen or so German soldiers, with their hands up and their clothing on fire. Several of our men took off their tunics and beat out the flames, but despite this one or two of the Germans were quite badly burnt.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

"By heavens!" said the corporal, "that's a powerful weapon, sir. I'll remember it in future when I want to mop up a dugout."

Soon after this, Stewart and I gathered up our men, set our tunnels in order, and then made our way back to Divisional Headquarters, where we met Captain Livens and received warm congratulations for the good job we had done.

Stewart, by the way, became one of my very best friends from that time on. Previous to being in the Army, he had served with the British Navy, and had been on three destroyers, each of which had been torpedoed. He used to say that these experiences had made him feel that the Army might be safer, and so he had had himself transferred!

Following the engagement just described, Stewart did a fine gas discharge on the Australian front. Unfortunately, there were several hidden machine guns in the strong point that was being attacked, and these played havoc with the advancing Australians. All their officers were hit, and while it was none of Stewart's business, he rallied the men, led them on and captured the machine-gun post. He himself, however, was shot through the lungs.

I happened to be in the vicinity, and hearing of what had occurred, I immediately went over to see how Stewart had fared. I found him being carried off by stretcher bearers, unconscious and bleeding badly from the mouth, obviously at the point of death.

#### AFTER THE ATTACK

"I'm afraid he's done for, sir," one of the stretcher bearers said. "It's hardly worth carrying him down."

There was nothing that I could do, so I came away with a heavy heart, giving my friend up for dead.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### The Livens Projector and "The Wrath of God"

ON ARRIVING back at our base, we suddenly found how weary we were. For myself, I had not had my clothes off for nine days and nights, and for three days and nights I had not had any sleep.

We had put out energy in a most profuse fashion, and under very exciting conditions, and now Nature was beginning to take her toll. All I wanted to do was to sleep. My batman was waiting for me and he at once undressed me, put me to bed and brought me a steaming hot meal. But I was asleep before I had hardly touched it.

In a few minutes again, it seemed to me, I was awake.

"You've slept for twenty-eight hours," my batman told me. "Time to get up now, sir."

There was a hot bath waiting for me and after I had shaved and put on clean clothes I felt perfectly fit and ready to do the same job again right away if necessary.

I walked over to our orderly room and saw the Second-in-Command, a splendid officer by the name of Lieutenant Bansell.

"Well, what's next?" I asked him.

He shook his head.

"It's too bad, old man," he replied. "I'm afraid we're all 'washed up'. Livens has been informed that, while we did a good 'show', the effort required to take the

THE LIVENS PROJECTOR AND "THE WRATH OF GOD"

material up, and the casualties suffered by the carrying parties in doing so, makes it hardly worth while, and so the flame projectors won't be used again. The material is being taken back right now to be stored at the base."

"Then what's going to happen to us?" I asked.

"We'll probably be put into a Special Company for cylinder gas work," he said.

All at once an idea flashed through my mind.

"I've a suggestion for a better weapon," I said, and I told him of our experience with the oil cans and Mills bombs in the German dugout.

"Now look," I went on eagerly, "instead of squirting the flame over, why couldn't we throw the oil cans over from some kind of a sling or mortar? There'd be no waste, and they'd be very damaging."

"It sounds good to me," Bansell remarked. "I'll get Livens on the 'phone and tell him about it."

This he did, and Captain Livens told us to go right ahead and to make some experiments.

"Tell Strange," he directed, "to try blowing the oil cans out of a mortar."

Next into my mind came the memory of my school-days in England, when we used to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day by burying in the ground a round tube, loaded with a bomb and some powder, and firing it.

Now, what kind of a mortar could we get that would fire a two-gallon petrol can, some six inches wide, twelve inches long and twelve inches high?

It occurred to me that Army hard tack or biscuits were delivered from England in round wooden tubs;

that these tubs were about eighteen inches in diameter and two feet tall and might just about do in a pinch.

I despatched a man to bring over one or two tubs from the nearest Quartermaster store. I lined the wooden container with thin sheet iron and with slats outside and bound the whole thing with wire to make it stronger.

Next I had a hole dug in the ground and buried the container up to the lip. It was pointed at an angle of forty-five degrees. We piled dirt all around it to strengthen it. Then we put a small sack of gunpowder in the bottom of the tub with a fuse attached; placed a circular piece of wooden board on top of the gunpowder sack, and finally lowered the petrol can, filled with petrol, down onto the top of this board. We set fire to the fuse, ran back some distance, and waited to see what would happen.

In a few seconds, "boom" went the charge, and out into the air, in a splendid arc, flew the petrol can, to fall a hundred feet or so away on the ground. As it hit the ground it broke.

We tried some more shots with more powder. They worked! We found finally that we could hurl a can more than two hundred and fifty yards before the force of the powder shattered the can as it came out of the gun.

Next we tried loading the container as usual and tying a Mills bomb on the outside of the petrol can. The trigger was tied down with two or three thicknesses of linen thread, just tight enough to hold it in

#### THE LIVENS PROJECTOR AND "THE WRATH OF GOD"

place, and loose enough, we hoped, so that the shock of the discharge would break the twine and release the Mills bomb trigger.

We lit the fuse and, lying on the ground and reaching out, very gently pulled the safety pin of the Mills bomb. The thread held. Next we retired to a safe distance and waited for the gun to go off. "Boom," it went again! The Mills bomb, however, being timed for only five seconds, went off before the can hit the ground, exploding the can and setting the oil on fire in mid-air.

We found, on further experiment, that with the Mills bomb attachment we could get a range of not more than eighty yards if the can was to burst on the ground. However, this was something to go on with.

Now for a demonstration.

We found a spot on the front where the German trenches were less than eighty yards away and obtained permission to fire twenty shots. We "borrowed" from the Quartermaster store some twenty biscuit tins and made twenty mortars, and that same night we dug in the mortars. At a given signal, about eleven p.m., we fired them. Away the oil cans went through the air. They all fell in and around the new German front line trench and burst into a veritable volcano of flame. We heard shouts and screams from the Germans and S.O.S. signals went up.

A raiding party dashed over as soon as the guns had been fired and managed to bring back, in a few seconds



it seemed, two German prisoners who were in a great state of excitement and almost frightened to death.

"It worked fine," said Bansell, "but now we must find a way to increase the range."

It occurred to me that if we used fuse, we could cut the fuse to any length we wished and so "time" the explosion for ten or twelve or even fifteen seconds. The fuse would have to be placed in a small sack of gunpowder, which in turn would be placed inside the petrol can.

We tried this out, but despite all our efforts, the oil would persist in seeping through the sack and the gunpowder would not fire.

Suddenly one of our Lieutenants had an idea.

"I think I know something that would do the trick," he said. "Why not use a small thin rubber tube, closed at one end, that would hold say an ounce or so of gunpowder? You could put the fuse into it and tie the rubber tube at the top and the gasoline would not soak through the rubber sack."

We tried this out and it worked perfectly.

Now we had a range up to two hundred and fifty yards. Captain Livens suggested that we put on a really big "show".

"Let's fire off a hundred of them at one time," he said.

No sooner said than done. The Quartermaster's assistant complained bitterly, however, when we emptied all the biscuits out on to the floor of his store in order to get the containers, and he grumbled still more

## THE LIVENS PROJECTOR AND "THE WRATH OF GOD"

when we took from him a hundred of his precious cans of petrol. Our "show" was most successful, though, and resulted in a delay in the demobilization and dispersal of our "Special Sections".

One day Livens, who was a tall man and looked like some venerable cathedral canon, began jumping up and down in a high state of excitement.

"I've another idea," he exclaimed. "Let's see if we can fill these petrol cans with gas and throw over gas instead of oil."

After a few experiments, we succeeded in doing this, and thus was born the famous Gas Projector, afterwards called the "Livens Projector", which inflicted very heavy casualties on the Germans and did much to enable the British to be "top dog" in gas warfare from that time on to the end of the war.

Later, still another bright idea dawned on us. This was to fill the cans with ammonal, a high explosive, and throw them over on to the German wire. The ammonal should clear away the wire in no time, we thought. This, too, was tried, and proved to be a great success.

Now we became inundated with orders to "do our stuff", on this front and that, by infantry brigades and divisions, and it finally occurred to us that we had invented a brand new and most effective military weapon—a weapon that could discharge masses of burning oil or gas or high explosive on any given spot in a high concentration.

Both the mortar and the bomb were, of course, very crude, but now we had found that the principle was

sound, we soon designed on paper a workmanlike mortar and bomb and Captain Livens took some of our people over to England to have these improved devices manufactured and tested. In the meantime, while waiting for the improved weapon to arrive in France, we made a number of successful discharges, still with the improvised mortar and bombs.

\* \* \* \*

The standard British and German method of discharging gas, up to this time, had been by means of steel cylinders, some five feet high and about six inches in diameter, which contained highly compressed gas in liquid form. The cylinders weighed, when filled with gas, about two hundred pounds.

One day it occurred to us that we might try blowing over some of these whole tubes of gas with Mills bombs attached to the top.

I had noted, at an abandoned gasworks in a nearby town, a number of lengths of eight-inch pipe. We cut off a length, six feet long, had a thread put on the end of it, and found an eight-inch steel cap, which we screwed on the bottom.

We placed quite a heavy charge of gunpowder in the bottom of the pipe, with a long fuse attached, just as we had done with the biscuit-tin mortars. Into this tube we then lowered a whole gas cylinder, weighing some two hundred pounds, and tied the Mills bomb to the mouth.

We found a suitable spot and fired four of these

THE LIVENS PROJECTOR AND "THE WRATH OF GOD"

over. The theory was, of course, that the tubes filled with gas would go over, the Mills bombs would burst the valves, and the gas would come pouring out in such strength that it would penetrate the masks of the enemy.

It really was a wonderful sight to see these great cylinders turning over and over in the air. They all fell in the German trench. Our artillery then laid down a small box barrage, and a dozen infantry men, with gas masks on, dashed over and brought back a German prisoner.

When the man had recovered his senses somewhat, he was interviewed.

"Just when you were captured, had anything out of the ordinary occurred?" he was asked.

"*Ach! Yab! Yab!*" the trembling man replied. And he went on to explain: "I was standing with my friend, August Schmidt. August was opening a parcel of sausage and jam he had just received from home. He was standing against the rear side of the trench. Suddenly a great noise came from the English trench, and we saw big things come whirling towards us through the air. We could not move for astonishment. They fell into our trench."

"Do you consider these to be an effective military weapon?" was the next question.

"Most effective," came the excited reply in German. "Why, one of the big things hit my friend August right in the stomach, and with a gasp he died! *Ach!* It is a wonderful weapon indeed!"

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

We were nonplussed. The truth was that the weapon was not effective at all, for not one of the things had actually gone off, and where we had expected there would be a dozen or more casualties, only one man had been killed—and no wonder—when the two hundred pound tube had hit him square in the stomach!

\* \* \* \*

We soon used up the first small collection of crude mortars and bombs that had been sent over, and while waiting for others to arrive, we made some further experiments.

Someone, for instance, suggested that instead of throwing over a hundred or so oil cans, each from a separate mortar, why not build one mortar big enough to fire off a thousand?

We thought we would try out this idea. Into the heavy clay of the district we dug a tunnel, eight feet wide, eight feet long and twenty feet deep down, and lying at an angle of forty-five degrees. This hole was cased with heavy planks on all four sides.

Next we built a solid wooden box, of a size that would just slip into the square hole we had made. The box would hold, we calculated, about one thousand petrol cans.

Now we placed in the bottom of the hole, which we called a mortar, a number of bags of gunpowder, set a slight distance apart. In the end bag we placed a fuse. The idea was that these bags of gunpowder would go off, one after the other, at a fraction of a second's

#### THE LIVENS PROJECTOR AND "THE WRATH OF GOD"

interval between each, thus giving, we hoped, a series of gentle explosions or pushes to the wooden cage as it was forced out of this enormous wooden mortar. (We did not know it at the time, but actually we were using the same principle that the Germans later used successfully with their long-range gun that shelled Paris.)

Hundreds of pounds of tallow were used to grease the sides of the mortar. Then the wooden box or cage was carefully lowered into place, until it rested on chocks just above the gunpowder bags. We filled the cage with cans of petrol, placing here and there among the cans a few time fuses which we had now developed to go off at the moment it was expected the cans would arrive at their destination, some two hundred yards away.

When everything was ready, the fuse was lit. It would take about three minutes to burn down to the gunpowder bags, we knew. I think they were the longest three minutes I ever waited in my life.

Suddenly, long after we thought it was a misfire, the gunpowder bags went off. A terrific "boom" shook the earth. Out of the mouth of the hole belched the biggest charge that has probably ever issued from any single gun. One thousand square oil cans hurtled through the air, and just before they reached the ground, the bombs began to go off and the whole lot took fire. It was a fearful and awe-inspiring sight, and Army Commander General Gough, who was standing some distance in front of the gun, not far from the

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

target, christened the whole affair, "The Wrath of God".

We received congratulations all round and a trial on a suitable enemy point was ordered. We carried the trial out successfully, but again G.H.Q. decided that the expenditure of time and planks and petrol cans, and, curiously enough, of mutton fat, was greater than the results warranted, and so this enormous weapon,—the biggest gun ever fired in history—was only used once again.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### Demonstrating the Projector

IN THOSE early days of the use of gas, our little Company did not find much favour, as a rule, with the infantry. The infantry, naturally enough, did not like to supply the large number of their men we required for carrying parties, and then, after our discharges had taken place, it was usual for the Germans to shell heavily the spot from which we had fired. We ourselves had meanwhile returned to camp, sometimes safely and sometimes not, but the P.B.I. ("Poor Bloody Infantry!") had to stay on the spot and "take it". It was no wonder, therefore, that the "Stinks", as they called us, were not popular at all.

Continual criticisms flowed in a steady stream to Headquarters, and it was retailed to us finally that Headquarters was getting "fed up" with the discontent we were causing.

It now occurred to Captain Livens that the time had come when we must, in some dramatic fashion, "sell" ourselves and our weapon to the infantry and to Headquarters. How to do it was the problem.

One day there came the final straw. There was a certain German strong point that was notorious because it had resisted the assaults of a number of famous Divisions, including the Scottish, the English, the Canadians and the Australians.



We were asked to assist the next assault on this particular strong point by putting gas over first. This we did, and the assault was quite successful. We, of course, proudly proclaimed that it was all owing to our gas, but to our surprise and chagrin the Divisional Commander insisted that it was not because of but in spite of our gas, which, he claimed, was quite ineffective!

Something had to be done we felt, and be done quickly, to save our reputation.

We went into Amiens and obtained a number of shipping tags. On these we wrote in bold red letters the words: KILLED BY GAS. We then hurried out on to the battlefield, and wherever we found a dead German, with the obvious signs that he had been gassed, we tied a label on his body in some conspicuous place. Whenever we found a man without a too visible wound, some of our enthusiasts tied a label on him also, and it was said—though maliciously, I am sure!—that we turned men over on their faces, or on their backs as the case might be, to hide the wounds they had received, and then tied our labels on these also!

The labels made a great showing. We invited all the Staff Officers we could get into touch with from Division and Corps and G.H.Q. to come and inspect the effects of our gas. (As this happened a day or two after the event, and the weather had been hot, we felt pretty sure that no one would spend too much time minutely inspecting the dead soldiers, and certainly no one would venture to touch them!)

## DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECTOR

We understood afterwards that this little dramatic display had considerable effect with the G.H.Q. in favour of our weapon.

\* \* \* \*

We spent, of course, a considerable amount of time making experiments with new gases and giving demonstrations of our work. I recall one experience we had when we were testing out a new gas. Experiments, as a rule, were made on sheep, as they seemed to react much in the same way as humans. There was the advantage, too, that if found to be suffering, the animals could quickly be put out of their misery.

A number of sheep were kept in a corral for demonstration when important people happened to be present.

A short time before one most important demonstration was to take place, it was found, to everyone's horror, that the guard had left open the gate of the sheep pen, and that the sheep had all scampered away during the night. There was no time to round up any more of these animals. What were we to do?

Someone remembered suddenly that a neighbouring French farmer had a herd of goats. The farmer was interviewed and was persuaded to sell the goats. These were then brought over to our camp, to give their lives in the interests of scientific warfare!

The goats were first tied down in a trench. Then the party assembled. The bombs were fired and the gas went off.

After a certain prescribed lapse of time, I went over

with a few others to examine the goats. To my consternation I found the creatures, still enveloped in the gas fumes, lazily browsing away on the grass growing on the sloping sides of the trench. The goats were completely unharmed! There was evidently something about the constitution of a goat that could withstand gas poisoning; the same gas had previously killed sheep instantly.

We hurried back to the party and recommended that, since the fumes were still dangerous, the visitors should adjourn for lunch and view the results of the demonstration later.

We had about an hour and a half in which to do something. Many suggestions were made. Finally one of our sergeants said that if we would leave the matter to him, he felt sure that within the hour the experiment would be found to be successful!

Later, when the observation party came to view the goats, the animals were all lying on their sides, quite dead. It was therefore decided that the gas had been a very great success indeed.

(It was not until some time afterward that we discovered what the sergeant had done. It appeared that while we had been at lunch this man had procured from his brother, who had charge of the dispensary in a hospital nearby, a supply of strychnine, and he and his brother had given a dose of the poison by hand to each one of the goats!)

\* \* \* \*

## DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECTOR

On another occasion a party of us were invited to a nearby artillery mess for dinner. During the course of conversation we explained to our hosts what we were trying to do.

"Good heavens!" one officer exclaimed. "Engineers with guns! I never heard of such a thing!" And they all laughed heartily.

"Don't laugh," I protested. "Our weapon is really good." And I described to them what it was like.

"Why," another officer insisted, "with a thing like that you couldn't hit a barn door at fifty feet."

My pride as a Royal Engineer was by this time fully aroused. I also recalled that the motto of our force was that the engineers, besides being supreme in their own work, were supposed to be better infantry than the infantrymen, better cavalry than the cavalrymen, and better gunners than the artillerymen!

I gently reminded our hosts of this motto. They almost fell off their chairs with merriment.

"Now look," said the Battery Commander, "you say that your range is now one hundred and fifty yards. Well, I'll stand one hundred and fifty yards from one of your mortars, and you can have three shots at me. If I move more than a yard, I'll put up the best dinner we can buy in Amiens for your whole crowd."

The experiment was agreed to and the demonstration set for ten o'clock the following morning.

We started practising before daybreak with carefully weighed charges in a carefully weighed can. Then we dug a gun down, set it and fired, noting exactly

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

where the drum fell. We marked the spot with a small, inconspicuous little peg. Then we removed the gun and covered up the hole.

Our friend, the Battery Commander, turned up on time. We strolled casually along with him and then suggested, as if on the spur of the moment: "Now, here's a good spot."

"Anywhere you like," the officer replied.

We stood him with his two feet straddling the little peg.

"Now we'll pace off one hundred and fifty yards," I said.

We paced off the stipulated range and took care to place the last step right on the hole where the gun had already been tried out. With spades the hole was re-dug and the gun was placed in position. Then we shortened the fuse so that it would be sure to burst in the air before reaching our friend.

"All ready?" I asked him.

"Sure, go ahead," he ordered, with a distinctly supercilious air.

The gun was fired. The petrol can rose into the air and made, straight as a die, for the spot where the officer was standing. He stood quite still, but we could see that he was beginning to turn pale.

All at once, when the can was about fifty feet away from him, in the air, the bomb burst and caught fire.

This was more than the human target could stand. He turned and ran for his life.

We had a very good dinner in Amiens that night,

## DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECTOR

but we paid for it ourselves, having explained to our sceptical friend the joke we had played on him by carefully first measuring the course.

\* \* \* \*

Another incident that appeared rather amusing at the start, but that almost had very serious consequences, was when we were asked, on a certain front, to give an exhibition of the breaking of wire in front of a trench with ammonal high explosive bombs. This was before the bombs had been perfected with the famous Livens Percussion fuse. We were still using dynamite fuse, which we had to set alight just as the bomb was fired.

A number of Staff Officers had assembled, including among them an Australian Brigade Commander. Our guns were fired and the bombs dropped on the wire and some into the trench itself.

There was one drawback to this kind of firing. Sometimes the fuse, instead of burning down the centre and reaching the bomb in a few seconds, would smoulder on the outside and the fire would not reach the charge in the bomb to explode it for several minutes. We usually, therefore, waited some considerable time before we approached these unexploded bombs.

On this particular occasion of which I speak we sent over a number of bombs. We counted the explosions. All had gone off excepting one. After a short time had elapsed, I walked over to the trench. There

was one bomb, I could see, with the fuse still smouldering.

Suddenly I noticed that the Australian Brigade Commander was standing beside me.

"Don't come too near, sir," I warned.

"Oh, that's all right," he exclaimed. "I'm used to these things." And he approached still closer.

Just as we reached the edge of the trench, the bomb exploded and the unfortunate Brigade Commander was blown flat on his face by the shock. He was uninjured, though naturally rather shaken, and he was also considerably annoyed.

A sequel to this incident happened some months later. We were preparing to do some work for an Australian Division, and it became my duty to drive up to Divisional Headquarters to make arrangements for the coming gas discharge.

"I should like to see the G.O.C.," I said.

"He's engaged for a moment," replied the affable young Staff Officer who had greeted me. "But sit down and wait, won't you?"

I sat down and we conversed for a while. In the course of our conversation the young man said:

"By the way, when you talk to the G.O.C., be sure to speak in a loud tone. He's a trifle deaf, you know. Some time ago a confounded engineer officer permitted a bomb to burst quite close to his ear and he's never been able to hear properly since. My, but he certainly is angry with that man!"

## DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECTOR

I conveniently found that I had another immediate engagement and made a hasty retreat!

\* \* \* \*

When King George V. was making a tour of the front he took a great interest in the new gas weapon we had developed and asked to have a demonstration arranged.

Knowing the King to have been a sailor, and so a good marksman, we determined to try to put on a specially good "show". We decided to fire half a dozen of our projectors from the centre of a wood, *by map bearing only*, at an unseen target on the other side of the wood, thereby proving to the King how efficient was our marksmanship.

I must admit that the day before the King's visit we did a practice shot or two, and that we erected the target on the spot where the shells fell. We decided, however, that since it was the King himself who was going to be present, we must take no risks whatever of accidents happening. The King must be placed in a spot where he could witness the demonstration yet at the same time be safely out of the line of fire, for the guns, of course, had to be re-dug into the earth each time they were fired, and there was always likely to be some variation in position after each shot.

His Majesty arrived, looked over the ground, examined the projectors, and watched us dig the trench. He saw the projectors fitted into place, the map brought out, the compass bearing taken, and the guns



sighted. Then he was escorted to the other side of the wood, to the point that we had already chosen, and that was quite out of sight of those firing the guns.

The King and his party stood about one hundred yards to one side of the target. On a given signal the guns were fired.

Unfortunately the ground was rather wet. Five of the guns went off as expected, but for some reason one lagged behind. By the time it discharged, it had been pushed slightly out of position by the concussion from the adjoining guns. Its bomb screamed over the wood somewhat at a tangent and, to everyone's consternation, fell only a few yards from the King himself!

The bombs were not loaded, of course, and the King knew this, but it was not, to say the least, a pleasant experience for him. The King, however, knowing it was purely accidental, took the whole affair in excellent good part, and insisted that nothing should be said to the officers responsible for the firing of the guns.

Our Commanding Officer relayed this information to us later, but he added, in a significant tone:

"Under the circumstances there is nothing more for me to say to you—much as I should like to."

His grim look, I must admit, held more meaning than any words he could have uttered!

Once or twice we were in the same Army area as the former Prince of Wales, now the Duke of Windsor, and we had the opportunity of seeing at first hand how extremely popular this young man was. He did an immense service to the British, and so to the Allies, by

#### DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECTOR

a special little job he seemed to have set himself, which was to try to maintain and to increase the morale of the troops. He made himself particularly friendly with the Tommies, and many were the stories that were told of his kindness and consideration for the men.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### Humour in the War

WE DID "shows" for each one of the British Armies and Corps, for the Canadians and the Australians, for the French and the Belgians, for the Portuguese, and finally for the Americans. We managed to achieve quite a good reputation for our work.

War was hard, but it was not *all* tragedy, horror and bloodshed. There was occasional humour in it. Take what happened to my good friend, Lieutenant Moore, for instance.

Moore was the delight of our Company—a brave and gallant gentleman in every sense of the word. He was a splendid musician—he had been a cathedral organist in England and was a fine singer with a well-trained voice—but he was an inveterate practical joker. No one was safe when Moore was around.

One day, however, an opportunity came to us to play a practical joke on Moore, instead of him playing one on us.

It happened that the Belgians had asked for a gas discharge to be done at a certain point. It was winter-time and the weather was very disagreeable. No one wanted to go.

"Send Moore," someone suggested. "See if he can find anything funny in this job."

To our surprise, Moore expressed himself as quite

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

pleased to do the work. He took with him a sergeant and a few men. Off they went to the Belgian front, to make the first gas discharge the Belgians had ever seen.

Moore's job was to fire off a small discharge of about fifty gas drums at a certain German machine-gun strong point that had been giving a deal of trouble to the Belgians. As soon as the gas was discharged a Belgian raiding party would follow over, capture the gunners and demolish the machine-gun point, it was hoped.

The gas discharge went off according to plan. But the Belgians, not being used to this kind of thing, rather hesitated to follow up the gas. Moore and his men, however, casually walked over behind the gas discharge, captured the strong point and marched back with half a dozen German machine gunners. Then the Belgian demolition party went over and blew up the enemy strong point.

It was a simple "show", nothing out of the ordinary, and all in a day's work for our Special Company.

When Moore told us about it, someone had a bright idea. Here was a chance, it was suggested, to get even with him at last.

We concocted a fake telegram, and had it delivered from Signals by special messenger. In the message Moore was informed that he had been awarded several decorations by the King of the Belgians for the fine work he had done in the recent engagement. He was ordered to proceed, on such and such a date, to be presented to the King and to receive the decorations.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Moore was delighted and filled with excitement at the prospect of meeting the Belgian King. We carefully rehearsed him, over and over again in our mess, in walking forward and bowing to the King and then in backing out of the King's presence. Moore took it all quite seriously and it was all we could do to keep from laughing and giving the whole joke away.

Finally the great day came. We had arranged that a sergeant should go on ahead on a motor cycle, wait for Moore at a certain place about five miles along the road, stop him and give him a message that would explain the joke we had played on him.

Moore started out in the Company's best car. Some considerable time elapsed while we waited impatiently for his return.

Presently the sergeant, who had been sent ahead on the motor cycle, came back. He asked us when Moore was going to start.

"Start? Why, he left here hours ago," we explained.

Something, of course, had gone wrong, and so we immediately sent off two or three men on motor cycles to try to catch up with Moore. Not a sign of him could be found!

After about three days, Moore returned to the camp. There was a look on his face like that on the proverbial cat that swallowed the canary. He proudly wore a row of ribbons across his chest, and on the mess table he laid two morocco cases, each containing a Belgian decoration!

He also showed us the other decorations he had

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

brought back for the N.C.O.s and men who had been with him on the raid.

He thanked us most profusely for our kindness in rehearsing him. Everything, he said, had gone off well.

Later he admitted that one strange thing had occurred when he had first arrived at the King's Headquarters and had reported to the Officer-in-Charge and shown him the telegram bidding him to appear before the King. The officer, he said, had seemed to know nothing whatsoever about the whole affair. However, he had 'phoned up the King's A.D.C., and after a brief delay, word had come through that the next morning Moore would be received by the King and would be given the decorations.

Our great practical joke had turned upon us indeed! We tried to keep the matter quiet, but it leaked out eventually, and Moore heard of it. He took it in good part, however, and chalked it up as one more good joke in his favour against us!

Poor Moore! Shortly after this happened he was killed. We were out at rest in a small French village, several miles behind the lines. The odd German "Whistling Willie" shell would come over now and then. These were small four-inch shells which the Germans fired from long-range guns, similar to the one, but on a smaller scale, which they used to shell Paris. The shells were not particularly harmful unless they exploded quite close to one or made a direct hit.

Moore was in the garden of the house at which we were billeted, sitting on a bench in the sun. He was

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

reading over a music score he had just received from his Church back in England.

One of the "Whistling Willie" shells suddenly came over and burst in front of him. A sliver hit him in the head and lifted up the front part of his skull and threw it back, just as if it had been on a hinge.

I was sitting in the mess when an orderly rushed in.

"Lieutenant Moore's 'ead's been blown off, sir," he cried.

I dashed out and there was Moore, holding his head in his hands. Blood was streaming through his fingers and part of his brain was exposed.

"The top of my head's gone," he said, in a quite natural voice.

"That's all right," I told him. I clapped the torn skin back on his skull and in no time we had him bandaged up and into a car on the way to an Australian field hospital, not far from our village.

They removed a good part of Moore's brain, but it did not seem to affect his mind at all. He lived for two weeks, and most of the time he was conscious and in no pain. He really thought he was getting better towards the last and actually died only from loss of blood.

One of us would visit him every day. It was a quite happy sight to see him, sitting up in bed, with a tea tray on his lap, surrounded by pretty nurses, and laughing and joking as though nothing were wrong. His wound, by the way, had one curious effect on him. He had been prone to stutter before the accident

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

occurred; now his stuttering was completely cured. He seemed to be particularly pleased about that.

\* \* \* \*

Speaking of "Whistling Willies" reminds me of a very amusing experience we had one Christmas-time in France. At the time we were out of the line for a rest in the shadow of the Forest of Toutencourt.

For living quarters we had managed to secure from a neighbouring Quartermaster's store a Nisson hut, which was a half-round steel shelter, some fourteen feet wide and thirty feet long. It was certainly an improvement over the tents and marquees in which we had been endeavouring, up to that time, somewhat shiveringly to exist.

A new officer joined us just before Christmas. He had been an architect in civil life and he shuddered when he looked at the bare walls of the Nisson hut.

"What a place in which to spend Christmas!" he exclaimed, in disgust. "Why don't we do something to brighten it up?"

"Right-o," said the Officer commanding our unit. "You are herewith appointed O.C. Decorations and Christmas Jollity!"

The new officer set to work at once. First he found some wrapping paper, not too much creased. On this, under the magic of his pencil, the ugly interior of the Nisson hut was transformed into a cozy dining- and sitting-room. At one end was an attractive brick open fireplace.



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

"Now," he said to us, when he had finished his sketch, "here is a list of the materials I shall require."

The list included a number of long poles to simulate rafters, some bricks, mortar or cement and pieces of iron to make the chimney and fireplace, and some lumber to make easy chairs.

We all joined heartily in the spirit of the thing. First we set out to cut down a few trees in the nearby forest. Bricks we obtained from an old brick brewery that had been badly shelled. The Quartermaster let us have some cement and a few other things that were needed. A local gasworks, abandoned because it was within shelling range of the enemy, provided the iron bars.

Under the skilful direction of our architect, and with the aid of one or two of our men who were expert carpenters and bricklayers, the bare-looking Nisson hut was soon transformed into a facsimile of the room on the design. Several wide armchairs, in which one could recline quite comfortably, were stuffed with wool from a nearby abandoned woollen mill, and were covered with yellow camouflage material which we obtained from the local camouflage dump.

The place was finished a few days before Christmas. So pleased were we with it that we decided to celebrate Christmas Day in really fine style. We sent an officer into Amiens, therefore, to bring back an assortment of choice wines.

Suddenly Nemesis descended upon us.

First of all it was the French Forest Warden. He

appeared one day and demanded compensation for the trees we had cut down. While we were still arguing with him about the price, along came the *maire* of the nearby village. He presented us with a long list of material, which he claimed was civilian private property, that had been expropriated by the British Army and must be paid for immediately. The list included the price of five hundred bricks, together with the cost of replacing them in the wall from which they had been taken; the price of six hundred kilograms of the best and finest wool, that had been made up for exhibition purposes, he said, together with the sum that would compensate for the prizes that the wool undoubtedly would have won after the war was over had the material been exhibited! The *maire* demanded that our Commanding Officer sign the requisition, acknowledge the liability, and see to it that the claim was paid without delay by the British Army.

Now we were faced with a most disagreeable thought. Regulations, we knew, permitted officers commanding units to requisition most generously anything they required, and to sign the vouchers which would afterwards be paid by the British Army. But regulations most specifically stated that such things as were taken must be for definite and urgent military use only. Would the making comfortable of our quarters, we asked ourselves in some trepidation, be regarded by headquarters as an urgent military necessity?

One of our officers, who happened to be a lawyer in

civilian life, gave it as his studied opinion that the case could not be sustained. He recommended that, if we wanted to avoid trouble with the authorities, we should settle the matter out of court. In other words, that we should whip around and pay for the things out of our own pockets!

This, of course, was something we had not contemplated. Finally, after much argument, the bill was cut down to one quarter of its original size, and paid.

This was not all, however. In the exuberance of our spirits, we had invited the Quartermaster over to see the improvements we had wrought. To our astonishment, the day following his visit, our O.C. received a chit from the Quartermaster, asking him to call.

He could not find, the Quartermaster told our O.C., anywhere in regulations that permitted of his stores being used for decoration purposes. He should, in the course of his duty, take the matter up officially, he said, since the material had been misused. The penalties for what we had done, he courteously but firmly pointed out, were rather severe. However, there was one possible solution. We were in a French area, and he did have permission to sell part of his stores to our noble Allies. Perhaps, if we cared to regard ourselves as French troops, he could stretch a point and sell us the material at the same price he would sell it to the French!

"Make out the bill!" we told him disgustedly. "We'll pay!"

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

Into Amiens we despatched an officer, to draw heavily on the Field Cashier for all that our combined credit would stand.

Soon the lorry arrived, bringing the wine.

"You told me to get you some good stuff," the young lieutenant who had been commissioned to make the purchase said, "so I found some real vintage stocks. There's burgundy, claret, champagne, creme-de-menthe, benedictine, and, best of all, some forty-five-year-old brandy. Isn't that fine?"

We gasped. "What did it all cost?" we demanded in chorus.

"Well, it cost rather a lot," the young officer admitted with a smile. "But I've paid for it all myself and the mess can pay me back later." (The lad's father was a wealthy steel merchant in Sheffield. Fortunately he could wait!)

The bottles were placed carefully on the shelves that had been erected on either side of the fireplace. They made a cheerful picture, and we determined to forget our troubles, make the most of our comfortable quarters, and enjoy Christmas to the full.

The morning before Christmas Day, the camp was awakened by a sound it had not heard for some time. There was a soft whistle in the air, a kind of thump, and then a gentle explosion a short distance away, just inside the forest. It was succeeded by five or six more explosions, at regular intervals, each one coming nearer to our camp.

It was soon discovered that these were "Whistling

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Willie" shells and an Army Staff Officer suggested that we at once dig trenches and take shelter. We could not bear to leave our comfortable hut, however, so we decided to stay where we were and take a chance.

Suddenly, as we stood a short distance from the hut discussing the matter, a whistle became audible in the air quite close at hand. We flung ourselves to the earth and hugged it tightly. There was a loud explosion nearby. When we looked up we saw the walls of our Nisson hut bursting out like a balloon. They fell sideways to the ground. Bricks, boards, bottles, and scraps of iron were hurled all over the place.

We rushed over to see what had occurred. A "Whistling Willie" shell had fallen dead on the hut. There was nothing left of our comfortable Christmas quarters, nor of our expensive Christmas fare; only a mass of debris, soaked in wine.

\* \* \* \*

A very humorous incident occurred while we were practising one day with our new projectors behind the lines. We happened, on this occasion, to be experimenting with high explosive shells. We fired a dozen of them in a field. Suddenly, just as the shells were about to hit the ground and explode, a thousand yards or so away from the edge of a wood, six cows walked out of the wood, and it looked to us as though all of them must be killed.

The cows, however, suffered no harm other than a curious form of shell shock, which made them walk

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

backwards. Nothing would induce them to turn round!

The farmer who owned them was in the Army, and so were his sons, and the farm was being managed by his wife, an elderly woman, and her two daughters. Very soon these women came hurrying out and those of our men who could understand the dialect or *patois* of that district said that they had never in their lives heard such a stream of invective and abuse as that French farmwife directed towards us when she found out what had occurred. She talked to us in a steady monotone, and used, over and over again, every cuss word in the French vocabulary!

She and her daughters finally got the cows into the barn, the animals still walking backwards. It was the most ludicrous sight, and we could not help shouting with laughter. All the time the old woman stood with her arms akimbo, yelling at us, until those who could understand finally had to clap their hands over their ears.

The next day, accompanied by the *maire* of the village, and *monsieur l'avocat*—an aged French lawyer, with a long, white beard—the farmwife again appeared before us, demanding heavy damages for what we had done to her cows. The cows, she claimed, still walked backwards, and in addition would give no milk! She claimed that they were the finest cows in the whole province and could never be replaced adequately. We signed the necessary documents and

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

I fear the British Government paid heavily to settle the whole affair.

\* \* \* \*

Another time we happened to be conducting the same kind of practice in a large wheat field, on one side of which was a farmhouse and some buildings. We were firing straight up the field, away from the habitations, but the ground was of clay and the subsoil was slippery and wet.

We were firing six guns at a time, and one of the guns, being somewhat delayed in the discharge, slipped a little to one side. This, of course, changed the angle of the discharge, so that the bomb, instead of floating in the air down the centre of the field, went off at a tangent and dropped through the roof of the farmhouse! (These shells, fortunately, were "duds" and were merely loaded with water to make up their weight.)

Wondering what had occurred, we rushed over to the house. We were met by a very aged Frenchman, walking with the aid of two sticks.

"*Monsieur, le commandant,*" he said in French, "I who have the honour of speaking to you am a soldier of France—a *sous-lieutenant* of the Marshal Bazaine. I offered my life for *la patrie* in the war against Germany long ago. Were I younger, I would still be at the front. But even as an old man, I offer to my country all that I have," and he waved his arm dramatically, indicating the whole of his farm. "*Monsieur,*" he went

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

on earnestly, "you have dug up my fine fields of wheat. Good! We will let that pass. You have brought up the subsoil to the top of the ground in the trench you have dug, and for years from now that patch will produce not wheat but weeds. Good! We will let that pass also. You fire off your cannon each day and frighten my pigs, so that they do not put on weight, my cows so they will not milk so well, and my chickens so that they do not lay. Good! For *La belle France* I would give even more. But, *monsieur le commandant*, could I ask you please, for the sake of an old man, please to fire your guns so that the shells do not fall on my house? Your great bomb just fell right through my roof, and, as you will see, it went through my grandchild's cradle, and only by the grace of *le bon Dieu* had I taken my grandchild in my arms but a few moments before!"

\* \* \* \*

Another curious incident that I recall occurred at the time when the Germans were making their great voluntary retreat back to a prepared position known as the Hindenburg Line. We advanced after them and occupied villages in which the Germans had lived up to a short time before.

The influenza was raging badly in this area and some said that this was the reason why the Germans had retired. There were many graves of Germans, but the toll taken of the French inhabitants was pitiful in the extreme.



We came to one village where the *curé* and the sexton were burying the last of over a hundred people who had died. There was nobody left in the whole village but these two, and it looked to us as though even they also must die soon.

Our unit was to stay for a few days in a certain village that had not suffered quite so badly, although there had been a large number of deaths. The billeting officer had found for me a bedroom in a somewhat better-than-ordinary house.

The house was owned by a Frenchwoman, dressed in deep black, as were most of the people in those days, for almost everyone had lost some relatives or close friends.

"I will show you to your room, *monsieur*," my landlady said, in a rather sepulchral voice. And she led the way to a large room in which was a big, four-poster bed, equipped with a good spring, a deep feather mattress, an eiderdown, but no sheets.

"Are there no sheets?" I asked. (The French were always most anxious to supply sheets, because the rent of the room rated a little higher if sheets were provided.)

"Come with me, *monsieur*," the woman replied, still in the same solemn tone.

She led the way downstairs again, walked along a dark hall, and stopped before a closed door. Putting a finger on her lips, to motion me to silence, and then crossing herself, she opened the door and, beckoning me to follow, tiptoed into the room.

## HUMOUR IN THE WAR

There, on a sofa, I saw the outline of a body. It was lying on one white sheet and covered by another. The Frenchwoman pulled down the top sheet, to reveal a white-haired, emaciated-looking person, evidently not long dead.

"This, *monsieur*," the woman said gravely, "was my dear sister. She died last night. She is to be buried within the hour. Then these sheets will be available for monsieur's bed."

I paid for the sheets but, needless to say, I did not make use of them!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### Wounded for the First Time

AT ONE point on a certain front, the infantry were held up badly by a mass of German wire, and we were asked if we would drop a hundred of our high explosive ammonal bombs on the wire and clear it away.

It must be explained that the use of ammonal in our earlier improvised gasoline-can bombs was so dangerous that the fuses were not placed in the bombs until the very last moment before firing and always at the actual place of discharge. It took at least two hours to prepare a hundred bombs for firing.

Unfortunately, we did not have time to survey the point from which the mortars would be dug in and fired. We were assured, however, that there was a suitable flat place at which to dig them in, and also that there was adequate shelter for the party who would have to spend considerable time sitting around the bombs while the fuses were being fitted to them just before they were to be fired.

When we arrived at the point we found, to our dismay, that the position was quite exposed to the enemy's observation, and that the only shelter available was an old shell-hole, that had been sandbagged round the sides and roofed with sheet iron, and then connected to the trench system. In other words, there

#### WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

would be practically no protection whatever from enemy fire for the men loading the bombs.

The bombs, filled with highly-explosive ammonal, were delivered safely to the shell-hole. There was hardly room for us to move. While some of our men were "digging in" the mortars a short distance away in the open, I sat with six others in the shell-hole, fitting the fuses to the bombs. We reckoned that it would take us at least two hours to do the job under the difficult conditions with which we had to contend.

Shells were dropping in the vicinity, and presently some of them began to come quite close.

"Blimey, sir," one of our sappers exclaimed, "suppose one of them there Boche shells drops in 'ere! What'll 'appen then?"

"Well," answered the sergeant, "we'll all be a-meeting of Saint Peter before we knows wot's wot!"

Shivers ran through me as I realized how extremely vulnerable our position was, and what a devastating explosion would occur if a shell, or even a machine gun bullet, should come into the hole we were in and strike a bomb!

We were within an hour of finishing when the officer in charge of digging in the mortars reported that everything was ready so far as he was concerned and that no casualties had occurred.

I decided that it was now time for me to report to Battalion Headquarters, about half a mile down the trenches, so off I went. At Battalion Headquarters, after agreeing on a "zero" for our discharge, I was

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

offered, and most gratefully partook of, a stiff drink of whiskey, and feeling much happier in my mind I set out once more on my return trip up the shallow communication trench to the place from whence I had come.

Suddenly, as I was walking along, I saw a burst of shrapnel in the sky, a hundred feet or so up. There was a sharp whistle past my ear and I received a heavy blow on the right arm. I looked at my arm in surprise; it was dangling loose beside me and had become quite numb. I saw a hole just below my shoulder and a stream of blood was flowing down inside my sleeve and over my hand.

"Why, I'm hit!" I said to myself. "Funny, but it doesn't hurt at all!"

At that moment an infantry officer approached.

"You're wounded, old man," he said. "Come into our dugout and get a dressing."

In the dugout my tunic was removed and it was found that there was a ragged hole in my arm, just below the shoulder. It was bandaged up and I was given another stiff drink.

"Wait here for a few minutes," the officer advised. "We'll have a stretcher sent down for you. You're getting a bit white around the gills."

"I don't need a stretcher," I replied. "I have to get back at once to do a 'show'."

"You're in no shape to do that," the officer protested, but while his back was turned, I managed to get out of

## WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

the dugout and soon was back in our own shell-hole with the men preparing the bombs.

I found the men quite cheerful, their task almost done. Soon it was finished, the projectors were loaded with bombs and fired, and I was told afterwards that we did a splendid job on the enemy wire.

However, once the guns had gone off, I knew nothing more. When I became conscious again, I was lying on my back and someone was forcing whiskey down my throat.

"I guess the explosion knocked you out, sir," said the sergeant. Then for the first time he caught sight of my arm. "Why, you've been 'it! Come on, now," he ordered, "let's get down to the dressing station at once."

Off we went, the sergeant and another man half-carrying me, though really I did not feel ill, merely a trifle weak at the knees.

At the base of the communication trench there was a first-aid dressing station. We went in. There were a number of men standing around, many with bandaged heads and limbs. Some were lying on stretchers, waiting to be attended to. A man, lying on the floor near where we had entered, had his shirt off, and a medical officer was kneeling beside him, probing mercilessly in his back.

"My God!" the man was groaning, "I can't stand it, I tell you! I can't stand it any more!"

"Don't make such a fuss," said the M.O. roughly. "You'll soon be all right."

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The man's head suddenly fell to one side. He *was* all right now, poor devil. He was dead.

They carried him out and the M.O. turned to me.

"Well, you're next," he said curtly. "Where're you hit?"

"In the arm," I told him.

"Take off your shirt and sit down," he ordered.

When I had done this, he approached me with what looked like a long meat skewer. I thought of the unfortunate man who had preceded me and I suddenly felt sick.

"Now, shut your eyes and grit your teeth," the M.O. said.

He pushed the skewer into my arm and jiggled it around. I could not repress a loud "Ouch!"

"Don't cry out," said the M.O. sharply. "Set an example to the men!"

I looked him straight in the eye.

"You're being pretty rough, you know," I reminded him.

"Oh," he said, "I haven't time to be gentle. Grin and bear it."

It was over at last and I was bandaged up. The next morning I found myself in the Casualty Clearing Station. There I was operated on and a piece of shell was removed from my arm.

"It's a nice two month in 'Blighty' for you," the surgeon told me. "You're a lucky fellow to be going home."

I was sitting outside the operating tent, getting a

## WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

little sun while waiting for the special Red Cross train, which was due in about an hour to take the wounded to Boulogne, when an ambulance drove up, and out of it, with his arm in a sling, stepped the very Medical Officer who had dealt with me so roughly a short time before.

"Hello," I greeted him. "What's happened to you?"

"Oh," he replied, "soon after you left, the Boche dropped a few over and one burst outside the dressing shelter. I got a piece in the arm, just about the same place as you."

The train drew up then and all of us were placed aboard. In a few hours we arrived at the Boulogne Base Hospital. The Medical Officer was placed in the same room as myself.

"So you're going to be fixed up," I said to him. "Well, I don't envy you, old man."

"Does it hurt much?" he asked.

"It certainly does," I replied. "I told you so at the time, but you wouldn't believe me."

"I thought you were fooling," he insisted.

"I wasn't," I told him earnestly, "and what you did to me is nothing to what they'll do to you when they get you on the operating table here."

He turned very white. In a few minutes they took him down. When, some time later, he was brought back again, there was a queer look on his face.

"You know," he said to me, "this has done me a lot of good. I think I'll be a little gentler with the boys when I get back. I know how it feels now."



We arrived in London about two in the morning of the following day. A gentleman met me in his private car—a volunteer ambulance driver, he told me he was—and drove me to a lady's residence that had been converted into a private hospital.

Here I had a very happy time, indeed, marred only by the fact that for a time my arm seemed to get worse instead of better. Finally the suggestion was made to me that it might be a good plan to have it taken off.

"We don't want gangrene to set in," the doctor said. "How about it? It's for you to decide, you know."

I thought of my future life with only one arm. It was not a pleasant prospect to contemplate.

"Wait a few days," I begged him. "Then I'll decide."

Fortunately, a turn for the better took place almost at once, and so the operation did not have to be performed.

I shall always remember with deep gratitude how extraordinarily kind the gentlefolk who owned the house were to their patients. We were waited on by the women of some of England's oldest and finest families, and as soon as we were convalescent, people came every afternoon with cars to take us for drives out into the country.

It was while I was in this hospital that I learned of my friend Jack London's death.

It will be remembered that on parting from Jack I had promised him that if the chance came I would try

## WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

to find a place for him in the British Army. In the excitement of my military duties, however, I forgot all about my promise for some time. Then one day, late in the summer of 1916, I had come upon my Commanding Officer reading a Jack London book.

"D'you like that book, sir?" I asked him. "I know the man who wrote it. He's one of my best friends."

My Commanding Officer was immediately interested. He said he had always admired Jack London's work and was surprised that such a man as he was not over in France as a war correspondent.

Into my mind flashed the memory of Jack's parting request.

"Could you get a commission for him in our outfit, sir?" I asked.

"I could get him one tomorrow," was the prompt reply.

"Then I'll send him a cable to come over right away," I replied.

Unfortunately, that night we had to do a "show". As luck would have it, I received the wound that I have just described, and was sent over to England for convalescence.

The first afternoon I was well enough to go out, I intended to drive straight to Military Signals and to send Jack a wire telling him that his commission could be arranged for and that he should come over at once. As I sat down to my lunch, on the day that I was to take my first drive, however, I picked up a copy of *The London Times* that had just come in, and almost the

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

first thing that I saw was a notice that Jack London, the noted American author, had died suddenly on his ranch at Glen Ellen, in California, the day before.

I felt a lump come into my throat, and my heart was heavy with grief. There had gone, I knew, one of the best friends that I, or any man, would ever know.

\* \* \* \*

At last I was ready to return to duty again. I was ordered to report to the London Headquarters of our Special Sections, to take part in further experimental work with the projectors.

It appeared that we had now arrived at somewhat of an *impasse*. The tubes we were using were seam welded, and our range was limited because of the small amount of explosive we could use to discharge the bomb, the reason for this being that the welded seam was weaker than the steel material itself, and so the projector tube burst easily. We could only achieve a range of about four hundred yards.

By this time G.H.Q. had developed a good deal of faith in our weapon, and we were urged to do all we could to improve it and to secure a longer range.

We tried everything we could think of—different kinds of steel, different kinds of welding, acetylene and electric welding and reinforced welding—all to no avail. Four hundred yards seemed to be the limit of our range.

Suddenly, into my mind flashed the memory of an occasion in Honolulu when I had ordered for the Gas

## WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

Company from the Mannesmann Tube Company, a German concern with a factory in Wales, a special weldless tube, with thin but very strong walls. They had made it for us and had done a splendid job.

I found, on enquiry, that the firm was still in existence, though now engaged exclusively on Admiralty work. With Admiralty priority, it would appear to be impossible for us to get anything made by them. They were the only firm in Great Britain, however, capable of making a solid drawn weldless tube of the lightness we required, I found.

One day Livens said to me: "Why don't you go quietly to Wales yourself, Strange, and see what you can do with these people? Tell them you know them. That may help."

I went. To my surprise and delight, the manager remembered me and the work he had done for the Honolulu Gas Company.

"You must come and have dinner with me," he said. "We had a lot of fun, you know, making that special order for you. I have often wondered how it turned out."

"It was excellent," I assured him. "And now I need your help again." I told him what I was after, but he shook his head.

"It's really too bad," he said, regretfully, "but we're far behind in Admiralty orders as it is, and this is an exclusive Admiralty shop. The Naval officers would never permit me to do any work for you. In fact,

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

they're already a little suspicious, I believe, as to what an Army officer is doing down here."

"Well," I returned, "an old friend from Honolulu can surely visit you, can't he? They don't need to know any more than that."

That night, after a good dinner, we sat in his library and talked the whole matter over.

"I'd really like to help you, you know," my friend said. "And I think I have an idea how it might be done. Come around tomorrow night, at about eight o'clock, and we'll make an experiment or two. No one need know anything about it. We'll both keep it under our hats."

We met as arranged, and with the aid of a few workmen, pledged to secrecy about the affair, a method was quickly developed of making exactly the kind of tube we required.

"Now listen," said the manager, "there's a special train leaves our station at midnight every night for London. Tomorrow night we'll have ready for you a dozen of these tubes, and if you can arrange to have the train stopped outside the works as it goes by, we'll load the tubes into the guard's van. The rest is up to you."

I saw the stationmaster and persuaded him to have the train stopped. That night, when all the Naval officers had gone home, the manager and I, and a select crew of men, worked hard in the shop. It was an eerie sight. No lights were turned on, and the only illu-

## WOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

mination came from the bright glow of the furnaces and the dull glow of the red-hot steel.

Soon the tubes were finished and were carried outside in the air to cool off. It would have ruined them, of course, to have poured cold water on them.

Midnight was approaching and presently we heard the train. It drew up near the works and stopped. We had fifteen minutes in which to load the tubes. Light chains had been wrapped around each of them. They were about three feet long and weighed about a hundred pounds apiece. Two men carried each tube slung from poles on their shoulders.

The tubes were finally all laid on the floor of the guard's van.

"Good luck!" shouted my friend, as the train started off.

I was sitting in one of the passenger coaches when suddenly the guard came rushing in.

"Those things of yours must have been red hot," he cried. "The van's on fire!"

I went back with him and found the van full of smoke and the guard's assistant pouring water over everything.

"Don't put water on those tubes," I ordered. "You'll ruin them."

After a while the smouldering died away, and it was discovered that nothing had been harmed. The tubes were burning hot, however, and they were still hot when we arrived in London. I tipped some porters generously, and with the aid of a number of old sacks,

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

they carried the tubes to two taxis. Then I drove through the night with them to our testing ground.

Early next morning we were testing the new tubes. They exceeded all expectations. Our first shot went over a thousand yards.

After a time we were able to obtain some priority at the Mannesmann works ourselves, and our guns could then be made with the full permission of the British Admiralty.

We went on experimenting with the projector and improving it all the time. Finally we achieved a range of 1,800 yards. Captain Livens also greatly improved the bomb that was used with the projector, and a remarkable fuse that had been invented, that would explode the shell just as it hit the ground, no matter in what position the bomb might land.

Soon we had these projectors by the thousands going forward to France. The American Army used them when it came in, and they were also supplied to the French. All in all, they turned out to be one of the most effective weapons of the Great War, and caused our little force of Special Sections to be kept together to the end. We were, at this time, however, reorganized under the particular name of "Z" Special Company, R.E.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### Working with the Royal Air Force

**B**ACK in France, a short time later, I took part in a number of successful gas projector discharges, at the Battle of Arras, as Messines Ridge, at Passchendaele, and in many other smaller engagements. Then, one day, orders came to me to report to the Headquarters of the British Long Distance Bombing Squadron, situated near Nancy, in the French Army area.

I made a leisurely trip through the French Army, calling at some of their Army Headquarters *en route*. The French were most interested to hear of what the British were doing with gas, and they gave me much useful information in return. On every hand I was treated as an honoured guest, and to my delight I discovered that I had lost but little of my knowledge of French, and my accent, so I was assured, was still at least understandable!

In due course I was landed in a tender—which I thought a curious name to give to a fast light motor truck—at the Bombing Squadron's Headquarters.

Here were situated a number of British Squadrons, equipped with large Handley-Page machines, each bomber capable of carrying over a thousand pounds of bombs, and designed to be handled by a crew of three men—a pilot, an observer, and a bombing officer.

The observer, as a rule, was a man of mature age,



usually over thirty, but I was surprised to find that the pilots and the bombing officers were all quite young lads, around twenty and younger. They were all extremely keen and alert.

Each Squadron had ten planes, and it necessitated a continual stream of new planes and new officers, arriving day and night from the plane and pilot's pool in the rear, to replace the casualties which were so tragically numerous. The knowledge that the average flight was only about one for each crew and for each plane, however, made, so far as I could see or hear or find out, not the slightest difference to the good cheer, the morale, and the general high spirits of these young lads, most of whom were so soon to die. I can only echo what their Commander told me: "These lads are marvellous, that's all!"

The raids were made on moonlit nights only. The planes started off from the flying field near Nancy, and, for safe guidance, followed the rivers—either the Moselle to Metz and from thence onward to the chosen German points, or east to Strasbourg and then north up the Rhine, usually bombing the railroad stations of Mainz, Coblenz and occasionally Cologne.

It was most exciting to see a night flight depart. The ten planes would be lined up one next to the other across the wide field. On a high observation tower, that had been erected at the centre of one edge of the field, stood the Commanding Officer and his aides. The C.O. would flash a light, giving the first plane's particular signal. The plane, whose two great twin motors by this

#### WORKING WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

time would be warmed up and turning to the pilot's satisfaction, would flash an answering light. Then, after a second or two, the starting signal would be given, and away the plane would run down the field, with its identity lights showing and take off into the air. After a few turns above the field, the plane's lights would be switched off, and all one would see would be two little streams of fire from the twin exhausts trailing out behind.

The Commander would repeat the same performance at intervals of a few minutes until each of the planes had been despatched.

One night I saw a terrible tragedy occur when the planes were taking off. The first plane had been signalled up. It circled round the field and suddenly came down with a crash. Its bombs exploded and the plane and crew were all blown into small pieces and a large hole was blasted in the ground.

A gang of men at once cleared enough of the wreckage away so that none of it would lie in the path of the next plane, and almost without any interruption, and very little behind time, the succeeding planes went up as though nothing untoward had occurred. Yet the lads in the other planes had seen the accident with their own eyes and knew that the same thing might befall them at any time. It struck me as a remarkable exhibition of nerve and self-control.

On a large blackboard in the Officers' Mess was marked the number of each plane, the names of its officer and crew, their time of departure, their destina-

tion, and their calculated hour of return. Although they started out at intervals of three or four minutes apart, their times of return were usually spread out from about an hour and a half after they had left to some four or five hours later, because of the fact that they were proceeding to different targets. The start, as a rule, was made at about seven in the evening, and everyone, of course, sat up each night until the last plane was in, or at least until it was so long overdue that there was no chance of its returning, and it had to be given up as a casualty.

I do think, however, that with all their self-control and rather offhand, blasé ways, none of the flying officers or ground crew or staff officers ever took calmly those long hours of waiting for the planes to return. They would assume indifference—pretend to be playing cards, or reading, or rough-housing in a game of indoor rugby, but their ears, I know, were instinctively cocked for the sound of a plane and for the sudden appearance of the messenger, bursting in with the news: "Plane No. 9 arriving, sir!"

A plane coming in would cross the flying field and show its individual identification lights. Then the field lights would be turned on, so that the pilot could see the runways. The instant the plane had landed, all lights would be extinguished again, thus leaving no mark for enemy bombers following over, which they sometimes would do.

When the pilots came in, it was not considered good form to show the slightest concern, either by receiving

#### WORKING WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

them vociferously or commenting on someone else's non-return. The returning pilots would quietly remove their flying togs, take a drink, and then write out their reports. Finally they would sit down to a good meal and enjoy a little chat about their experiences on the raid.

The greatest strain on everyone was when a plane was overdue. Then it was no longer plane No. 5 overdue, but it was Jones, Mallock or Cartwright overdue five minutes, then ten, then fifteen, then perhaps half an hour. If ever an hour went by, and no message was received from any part of the Allied lines, it was considered that there was but slim hope indeed. Of course, there always was the possibility that the plane might have dropped its bombs and made its way into Holland, where its crew would be interned, or that it might have crashed somewhere and its crew still be alive, but in some inaccessible place. As a last hope, it might even have crashed in German territory, its crew unharmed or at the worst wounded, and taken prisoner for the duration of the War.

There was a fine spirit of chivalry displayed by members of the Flying Corps in each Army. The Germans, for instance, always endeavoured to get messages through somehow to us that our men were down—unharmed, wounded, or killed. Sometimes a German plane would appear over our lines and, by means of a small parachute, would drop the belongings of some officer who had been brought down and killed.

This chivalry, one towards another, existed, of

course, in all branches of the fighting forces. I never, for instance, saw one single case of cruelty on the part of an Allied soldier towards a prisoner. I did, however, see innumerable instances of unselfish kindness. I think that most of our soldiers were surprised, when they went home on leave, to find how intense was the hatred on the part of the civilian people—men, women and children alike—towards the enemy.

It happened occasionally that a returning plane would come down behind our own lines, in which case the Commander's car, with some of the ground headquarters staff, would be despatched at high speed to bring in the crew and the instruments, particularly the watch from the plane. So much was the preserving of the watch talked about that the lads began to think that the watch was really more important than the plane or the crew themselves!

\* \* \* \*

One night while I was with the Royal Air Force, I saw a plane go out in charge of an observer officer whom I will call John Cavan. He really was a man of title and he had had quite an exciting career. He had been an officer in a Guard's Regiment, and early in the War he had lost an eye and a leg, and, of course, had been invalided out of the forces.

He was a wealthy man and had determined to get back into the war. He managed to take some private lessons in flying and soon became a competent pilot. How was he to pass his medical examination?

#### WORKING WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

The story was told that he hired a man who looked somewhat like him to take the required medical tests and another to take his flying tests. Then he used the influence of his friends to have himself assigned to the Long Distance Bombing Squadron—and here he was, in the thick of things once more!

This particular night of which I speak he was an hour overdue in returning from his raid. Just as we had given him up for lost, the telephone rang. The call came from a French village, some fifty kilometres away.

"There is a French farmer here," the voice said, "who claims that one of your planes has come down in his field. One officer has been killed and two are wounded."

We jumped into a car and set off at high speed for the place where the accident had occurred. There, in a field near a farmhouse, was the plane, completely smashed. Fortunately it had not caught on fire.

Carrying a lantern, the farmer led the way to a shed. In the shed lay the body of an officer, covered with a sheet.

"The others," the farmer said, after we had examined the dead man, "are in the house."

The farmer's wife met us at the door. She was very voluble.

"Oh, *messieurs*," she cried, "we have here two wounded men. One is not so bad, but the other—*mon Dieu*, he fall so hard one eye have turned to glass and one leg have turned to wood!"

We found Cavan lying comfortably on a bed, smok-

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

ing a cigarette. His wooden leg was sticking out, all in splinters. It looked like a piece of kindling wood. His glass eye was lying in a saucer on a table nearby.

We had difficulty in unstrapping the leg. The force of the fall had somehow jammed it tightly to his thigh stump.

"I hope this exposure, major, won't be reported," Cavan said to his Commanding Officer, in a pleading tone. "I've a good number of raids left in me yet, you know. Be a good fellow, now, and don't tell."

In a few days Cavan was on the job again. A week later he went up on a flight from which, alas, he never returned. Word came that he had been shot down at Coblenz and had been killed.

\* \* \* \*

The particular duty to which I myself was assigned was to make experiments in dropping gas bombs, for we had heard that the Germans intended to drop gas from aeroplanes on London, and naturally our people wanted to be ready so that reprisals could be instantly made.

We soon worked out a satisfactory technique, and a few flights were made over the nearest German towns, where we dropped pamphlets which stated that if gas were dropped on Allied cities, then we should drop gas on Germany, too. These messages, we heard, had the desired effect; the fact remains that no gas ever was dropped by the Germans from any aircraft during the last War. Had they dropped it, the Germans cer-

#### WORKING WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

tainly would have had a strong dose of their own medicine on their own cities in return.

Suddenly I was instructed to perform another duty, which was to experiment in methods of burning down aeroplane hangars and wooden sheds. It appeared that our scouting squadrons had discovered, at a certain place in Germany, well within reach of our planes, a large training aerodrome, where several hundreds of young German pilots lived and were being trained. Photographs revealed dozens of aeroplanes in hangars and standing out on the fields.

A most audacious scheme was planned. It was no less than that one of our large Handley-Page bombers should be remodelled, so that it would hold ten men as well as a quantity of petrol cans. This plane would actually make a landing at night on the German aerodrome field. Then the airmen would jump out, run to the hangars, burn them down, return to the plane and take off if they could.

It was a very secret operation, and the more one thought about it, the greater did the chances appear of there being the possibility of some success. At least, it was considered to be a scheme well worth trying out.

I was to work out the plans for the conveying of the oil and for its use in burning down the buildings.

After a few experiments, we developed a simple method of doing these things. We used two-gallon petrol cans, which were strong and sturdy and light, allotting two cans to each man, thus making twenty cans in all. Each man was also to be armed with



#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

a dagger. (We borrowed these daggers from a not far distant American Division. The American raiding parties were fond of using daggers when too much shooting was undesirable.) Then we devised a torch, that could be lighted quickly and with certainty, even in a wind, with a friction tube.

The plane was rebuilt, with wide doors that would open easily, so that the men could jump out quickly and re-embark the same way. As soon as the crew were landed, the plane would be turned around, ready to make its take-off. The men would dash over to the buildings with their petrol cans. The sides of the cans would be gashed with the daggers, and the cans, with the oil inside, would be thrown over the sides of the buildings; then the torches would be lighted, thrown on the spilled oil, and the men would dash back to the plane and leave.

Two extra men were to be carried, and these, armed with revolvers and knobkerries (also borrowed from the nearby Americans, who seemed to have a flair for odd lethal weapons of this kind) were to stand by the British plane and beat off any attacks that might be made.

A rehearsal of the whole affair took place. At the far end of our flying field we rigged up a facsimile of a wooden hangar. The plane was loaded with men, took off into the air, circled around for the length of time it was calculated the trip would take, then came down on the field. It taxied up to the building. Out the men jumped, ran to the building and set it on fire

#### WORKING WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

according to plan; then they dashed back, climbed into the plane and took off again. The whole thing was done in much less time than we had thought possible. It was considered a highly successful rehearsal.

"Zero" was set for three nights away, when the moon would be full.

We were all ready for the event. Then I was told that, as an engineer officer, I could not be permitted officially to take part in the raid. If I happened to be found hidden in the plane when it had set off, however, they wouldn't throw me overboard, of course!

Alas, on the night set for the raid, it became cold and cloudy, and no moon appeared. The event was postponed for the next night, but the bad weather lasted until the moon had waned, and then we had to wait for several weeks. We were keyed right up during all this time and held some further rehearsals, but with the next full moon the same bad weather conditions prevailed again.

By this time Headquarters had become impatient, and word reached us that the plane we proposed to use was wanted for straight bombing purposes. Reluctantly it was dismantled and the whole thing was "called off".

It seemed to me that this abandonment was a great pity, for the scheme would undoubtedly have been a most outstanding feat had it been successful, as well it might have been.

\* \* \* \*

My particular friend in the Flying Corps—and one always soon found, in any new outfit, someone with whom one became close friends—was a fine young English fellow named Fowler—"Lofty" Fowler as he was called. He was six feet tall, very handsome, and had a most ingratiating smile. He was nineteen years of age.

Now, any man who had made three or four successful long-distance flights was looked upon then as a great Ace. "Lofty" Fowler, however, had made twelve. I went up with him on his eleventh and twelfth flights, and it certainly was an unforgettable experience.

We followed the Rhine to Mainz once and the next time to Coblenz.

I had had a good deal of experience, by this time, of being under shell fire, and while I had never grown used to it, and always felt queer, yet, as did most soldiers, I considered myself somewhat of an expert at taking cover. Being in a plane, however, with a thousand pounds of live bombs hanging underneath one; with such a low ceiling that even machine gun bullets were penetrating the wings and whizzing past one's ears; being literally cradled in the beams of enemy searchlights every foot of the way from the time one struck the German lines to the time one left them behind again on the return trip; and floating, as it seemed, all the time through a quiet mist made by the smoke of exploding anti-aircraft shells, was something I had never experienced before. As soldiers say: "I had the wind up" every minute of the time I was on those two trips. I sat in grim silence and was only just about able

#### WORKING WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

to look out of the plane when we arrived over our objectives.

The bombs were dropped nicely on the targets. We not only saw the explosions but we felt the plane rock with the force of them.

After each of these trips there were dozens of bullet holes through the fuselage and the wings of the plane, but "Lofty" Fowler seemed to consider them ordinary "shows", and he remarked once, quite casually, that he was glad "everything had gone off all right". I myself could hardly speak, so great was my relief at being safely back on the landing field once more.

It was arranged that I should go up for the third time with "Lofty". He was going a short distance away to bomb Metz. There were some further technical details about the dropping of bombs I was anxious to observe and to take note of.

That morning "Lofty" tried to dissuade me from going along.

"You'd better stay home, old man," he said. "This is my thirteenth job, you know, and while I'm not superstitious, you might be. Besides, I'm determined that this shall be my last flight. I've had a staff job offered me in London and I'm going to take it. I'm making this flight just to prove that there's nothing unlucky in the number thirteen!"

I was fated not to go on this trip with him for the reason that, as I was crossing the flying field, early in the evening, I fell into a shelter trench and sprained my ankle. "Lofty" went up without me—and he never

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

came back. He was brought down by anti-aircraft fire on the outskirts of Metz.

Soon after the Armistice, I visited Metz and was able to see Fowler's grave. He had been buried by the Germans, and the propeller of his aeroplane had been erected as a marker and his name was engraved on it. I split off a small piece of this propeller and brought it home with me, and later I had a French cabinet maker make a walking-stick of it, which I have kept as a souvenir of my friend to this day.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### Visit to the Grand Fleet

ONE day an order came through that I had been chosen one of a small group of military officers to visit the Grand Fleet. We were to lecture on the course of military operations, so that the naval officers would have first-hand information of what was going on in France.

We first reported to the Admiralty in London, where we were given certain specific instructions about secrecy and so forth, and then we took a train travelling to a point somewhere in the extreme north of Scotland.

Here we were transferred to a small steam fishing trawler and started on the voyage to Scapa Flow.

I had never been a good sailor, but I was more seasick on that two or three hours' trip than I had ever been in my life before or have ever been since. Finally I found myself, about half-past eleven at night, wearily crawling up the gangway of a super-dreadnought—H.M.S. *Temeraire*.

I was made comfortable by a marine, who brought me some hot cocoa and biscuits. I soon fell sound asleep.

The next morning I reported to the officer of the watch, and was taken by him to the ship's Commander, Captain Underhill. Captain Underhill in turn introduced me to the ship's officers. Thereafter followed some busy and interesting days.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The Grand Fleet, anchored in Scapa Flow, was a really wonderful sight. The tremendous latent power in the battleships, and their attendant flotillas of destroyers and guardships, seemed to me to be impressive in the extreme. We have been informed early in this present War that a German submarine succeeded in getting into Scapa Flow, and in sinking a British battleship there. It seems incredible to me that it could have been done. The tide rips around the Flow are such that it was only with great difficulty that our own submarines, at certain appropriate times, could get in and out of the anchorage.

The *Temeraire*, I found, was a splendid ship. She had a remarkable collection of engravings and paintings of every ship that had borne the name of *Temeraire* since the original *Temeraire* was captured from the French. This present *Temeraire* had engaged at the Battle of Jutland, and here and there were notices indicating scars made by enemy shells during that encounter.

Each day I was taken in a launch to visit other ships. Once I was permitted to make a trip in a new type of submarine. We went out of Scapa Flow into the North Sea, and there torpedo practice was engaged in on one of our own destroyers. Four hits out of four shots were registered at different distances with the destroyer moving at varying speeds—a fine performance, I thought.

I was supposed to leave on the tenth day. But the day before, early in the morning, signals began to flash

## VISIT TO THE GRAND FLEET

and the ship started to weigh anchor. Even before a messenger came to tell me that the Captain wished to see me, I knew that something unusual was happening.

"I'm sorry, Strange," Captain Underhill said, "but I've strict orders from the Admiralty by wireless to put you ashore at once. We're going out into the North Sea, and it's quite possible we may meet the enemy."

"I'd like to go with you, sir," I exclaimed. "Couldn't you assign me to some duty? I'd try not to be in the way."

Captain Underhill smiled. "I'm afraid not," he replied. "But go down now, have your servant pack your kit, and we'll have a launch ready for you in a little while. And, by the way," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "be sure to say goodbye to the torpedo officer. He's a special friend of yours, I understand. And while you're in the torpedo room, don't get lost in any nooks or crannies, because we can't hold the ship for you, you know, and if we couldn't find you, we'd have to go out to sea with you along."

I grinned at him. "Thanks for the advice, sir," I said.

I made my way down to the torpedo room and sat quietly in a corner behind a rack of torpedoes. I could soon tell, by the motion of the ship, that we were under way. In a little while, the ship began to rock heavily, and I knew that we must now be well out to sea. I remained where I was, however, until the Lieutenant-Commander in charge of the torpedo equipment came down.

When he saw me he exclaimed: "Why, what are you



doing here, Captain Strange? I thought you'd gone off some time ago."

"I must have fallen asleep," I said.

"Well, I shall have to report you to the Captain," he told me.

"All right," I answered. "But don't fail to inform him that I got tired and fell asleep!"

The upshot of it all was that the Admiralty issued orders appointing me to be military observer for the Grand Fleet during the course of the expected operations, and so, there I was, suddenly in an official capacity in His Majesty's Navy. I felt very proud.

At a given point, the Fleet from Scapa Flow was to be joined by cruiser and destroyer squadrons from the Firth of Forth, and from other bases. We all met the next morning at daylight. It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight.

The whole Fleet was led by three great cruisers, that went past us so fast that we ourselves seemed almost to be standing still. They were the *Glorious*, the *Furious* and the *Courageous*—the same *Courageous* and *Glorious* that afterwards were made into aircraft carriers and that during this present War have both been sunk by enemy action. Each of these three cruisers just mentioned was armed with one gun of a very large calibre.

I was given an observatory post on the top mast with two gunnery officers, who would be taking ranges and sighting and directing the firing of the guns. We were dressed in asbestos suits, with gloves and shoes of felt, and with great hoods over our heads.

## VISIT TO THE GRAND FLEET

Very complete arrangements were made throughout the ship with hose pipes for extinguishing any fires that might occur.

There were few, if any, orders to be heard. Each man seemed to know his job thoroughly and went about it quietly and efficiently. The semaphores would wave on the flagship, signals would be written down, and each Squadron Commander would relay the orders received to the ships in his own squadron. Then each squadron would manoeuvre in different directions and the line and the distance apart would be kept perfectly from ship to ship.

The expected battle, however, did not take place, although, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, low on the horizon, through a light mist we saw the smoke of the enemy fleet. A few guns were discharged, but it was impossible to tell who was firing. Then the smoke on the horizon gradually disappeared and the news came that the enemy had retired behind Heligoland.

We then made north, up towards Jutland. About two days were spent cruising back and forth. But there was no further sign of the enemy, so a leisurely return was made to Scapa Flow. Everyone felt very disappointed that we had been unable to make contact with the Germans.

I could not help but compare the chances of a soldier in battle on land with those of a sailor in battle on the sea. I decided that while one was, of course, much more under fire on land than on sea, yet one might be wounded in a land battle and recover, whereas on the sea one

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

would probably either escape with a whole skin or be drowned. The only consolation for the sailor was that death would usually be swift and that he would probably know very little about it.

The contrast between soldiers and sailors struck me forcibly, too. Our soldiers, by the time I visited the Fleet in 1917, were weary and war-worn, and all of them appeared to be more or less shell-shocked. They did their jobs, and went through the required motions without too much grumbling, but they did everything apathetically, almost like automatons. In the Navy, however, the sailors were keen and alert, and there was great enthusiasm among them. They sang, their bands played, and they engaged in games and horseplay a good deal of the time.

I went back to join my unit in France feeling a little sad and depressed at the thought of what our soldiers were enduring, yet at the same time filled with a great pride in the security offered to the British people by the fine ships and the quiet, sturdy confidence of the sailors of His Majesty's Royal Navy.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### Wounded for the Second Time

OUR work was always dangerous, for our projectors had to be dug in, either in no-man's-land or immediately behind our front line, and even when further back they were usually in an exposed position. Consequently our casualties, especially among the officers, were quite heavy.

We found, by experience, that after we had fired our projectors, it was on the average only some seven minutes or so before the Germans got our range from the flame and smoke of our discharge. They would then start "plastering" the point at which we were located. We always tried to hide our guns with camouflage cloth before leaving, but it was usually "nip and tuck" with us to do this work and to get out of the way within the seven minutes' grace. Sometimes we managed to do it and sometimes we did not.

Then, too, once the gas bombs were in position, they *had* to be fired. There were no carrying parties available to carry the gas bombs back if they were not used, and they were far too dangerous, of course, to leave near our own front lines, for if the enemy shelled and smashed our gas bombs, the heavy concentration of gas would cause severe casualties among our own men. Our iron-clad rule, therefore, was: Whatever happens, once the bombs are carried up, the projectors must be

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

fired, and with the exception so far as I know of two occasions, they always were fired.

One instance when the guns were not fired occurred during one of the biggest discharges that the Special Sections had ever planned. It was in March, 1918, when the Germans overwhelmed the Fifth Army.

A large number of our projectors were in position. Suddenly, the Germans attacked, and in spite of the fine resistance of our own small force, some of the projectors and bombs were captured and later used against us.

I happened to be in the area where this unfortunate sequel occurred and was therefore able to see for myself just how effective our weapon actually was. I saw some forty of our men laid out in a dugout, all of them killed by our own phosgene gas, discharged from our own captured weapons. The dead men had froth around their mouths and nostrils. One or two, in another dugout, were still alive, but they were gasping for breath and could give no account of what had occurred. It was sad to see so many of our own lads killed and wounded by our own gas.

It was on this same occasion that I had, I think, my own most harrowing experience of the whole war.

I was instructed to try to reconnoitre Trones Wood, where the West Kents were beleaguered by the Germans. It was thought that our Gas Unit might be able to burn with oil bombs that part of the wood held by the enemy.

The only approach to Trones Wood—which was surrounded on three sides by the Germans—was by way

## WOUNDED FOR THE SECOND TIME

of a straight, wide, open and very exposed trench, in which dead and dying soldiers were piled up two and three deep like a thick, bloody khaki carpet. I had to crawl over these gruesome human bodies for at least a quarter of a mile, with a German sniper in a tree firing at me all the way. The smell of putrifying flesh on still-alive men; the stench of men dead for some time; the shocking feel, under my hands and knees, of stiff bodies and blood-soaked yielding flesh; and the sad groans and occasional piteous screams of pain of the wounded men upon whom I had to place my full weight, is a frightful memory I would gladly forget but, alas, cannot.

The other time when the bombs were not fired was when we had a job of discharging some five hundred bombs containing high explosive ammonal on to the wire at Bullecourt, an enemy point heavily defended and fortified against attack.

We were supposed, with our high-explosive bombs, to smash the wire immediately before an attack was made by the Australians. We were firing at about eight hundred yards, but our firing position was right out in the open, a dangerous place indeed.

The guns and the five hundred ammonal bombs were delivered at the spot. The carrying party got safely out of range. Our men began digging in the projectors. I had moved off a few yards on my way to report to the Infantry Battalion Headquarters the exact time we would fire, when a salvo of German 5.9 shells burst right on top of our pile of bombs. Five hundred of

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

them, each containing some sixty pounds of the explosive, went off!

The explosion threw me, a sergeant and three men, into a gravel pit, and the flying muck and earth covered us completely several feet deep.

Luckily, I had a walking-stick with me, and as I fell I happened to raise it in the air. The stick, therefore, was buried in an upright position above my head.

I managed to make a small hole by twisting and wriggling this walking-stick through to the outer air, and so I was able to breathe. By working about with my other hand, I managed to find the steel helmets of the men buried with me. They were so crushed by the gravel, however, that not one of them could move. One poor lad, with his head down at the level of my stomach, slowly choked to death while I was powerless to do anything to save him. I would probably soon have died myself had not a machine-gun party, searching among the debris for wounded, happened to see the top of my stick moving. They at once dug us out. The sergeant and I were alive but the others were dead. There were only a few unwounded survivors of this disaster out of a hundred officers and men. It was the worst tragedy that our "Z" Special Company suffered during the War.

As a result of this explosion, and of being buried under the dirt, I was rather badly shaken and shell-shocked, and was ordered to hospital. Here I stayed for a week and then was sent to a convalescent camp in the centre of France. For some reason or other, I did not

## WOUNDED FOR THE SECOND TIME

recover as I should have done, and experienced increasing trouble in breathing. Finally I was ordered to London for special examination. Here I was sent to hospital again, to take a special course of chest and stomach massage, and after two weeks of this treatment, I was taken to Blackpool to another convalescent camp.

The people of Blackpool, as the people of London had done, took the convalescent soldiers for drives each afternoon.

One day, driving along the seafront, I thought I saw a ghost. Coming towards me in an open carriage was the living image of my old friend, Lieutenant Stewart, whom I had last seen being carried off the battlefield for dead.

At the same moment that I saw this apparent ghost of Stewart, the ghost saw me. I heard a loud cry of "Trava Ho!"—a favourite South American salutation of Stewart's—and I knew at once that it was no ghost I was seeing but really Stewart himself. We stopped our carriages simultaneously and greeted each other with all the warmth of long-lost friends.

Stewart was pale and wan, a skeleton of his former self, but there was still the same gleam of devilment in his eyes and one could see that even if he was temporarily "down" he most decidedly was not "out".

"Why, I thought you were dead!" were the first words I said.

"I pretty near was," Stewart replied, with a grin. "But I came back to life. They kept telling me I'd die,



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

but I wouldn't believe them, and here I am, getting well."

I noticed then that he had a bar on his military cross ribbon, and well he had earned it, I knew.

We had a happy few days together in Blackpool; then I was considered fit enough to take a medical board. I was given three months convalescent leave in London and was assured that I would then be able to return to France.

\* \* \* \*

I soon wearied of doing nothing in London, so one day I walked over to the Ministry of Munitions, introduced myself to some of the people in the Gas Shell Department, and asked if my services could be utilized in any way.

They were very short-handed at the time and immediately appointed me Assistant Director for the Production of Gas Shells.

It was explained to me how the Ministry of Munitions had expanded like a mushroom since the War had begun, and on every side I heard—contrary to the general impression in England—of the fine foundation that had been laid for it all by Lord Kitchener, who most people seemed to think was the man whose shortsightedness had been responsible for the lack of shells at the beginning of the War. What I now saw in all the Ministry of Munitions buildings, with their thousands of busy workers, was really the result of his vision that the war would last a long time, I was told.

## WOUNDED FOR THE SECOND TIME

The trouble was that Lord Kitchener had found it difficult to persuade industrial people and some others in high places that it would be worth while to build new factories, and to equip old ones to turn out vast quantities of guns and shells. Just about the time when Lord Kitchener turned munition production over to other hands, the fruits of his vision and of his intense labours were beginning to show.

There were, however, some rather curious things going on at the Ministry—or so it seemed to me. In my own Department, for instance, I had an old gentleman working with shells who held an international reputation, I discovered, as a designer of aeroplane engines. What he was doing in a minor position in the Department of Gas Shell Production, of which he knew nothing, when the Aircraft Engine Department was crying out for the services of just such a man, I never did find out. He told me he used to have meetings at night in his home with those engaged on aircraft engine design and would give them the results of his long experience and knowledge in this particular work.

I had been used to American engineering practice, where things went forward quickly and where designs came swiftly on ideas and production followed swiftly on design. I found the tempo of work at the British Ministry of Munitions set at a much quieter and slower pace, and to one who had had American experience, it was sometimes most exasperating to find how little was accomplished each day. People took their time about everything, no matter how urgent the need.

When I first joined the Department, a number of firms who had contracted to make gas shells were far behind in promised deliveries. Couldn't something be done about this, I asked? I was told to be patient. Everything would come out all right.

As I began to hear, from day to day, of the more and more urgent demands in France for these long overdue shells, and as I recalled the men I had seen killed through lack of sufficient artillery support, I felt that I *must* do something about it. I would try to put a little "American pep" into this business. Stir things up a bit!

One morning I sent a long wire to each of about thirty firms concerned in the delay, and demanded a return telegram giving me exact details as to why the shell deliveries were so far behind.

The replies soon began to come in. The blame, I found, was placed on an ever-widening circle of *other* firms, who were making this or that essential part. Bottlenecks, these stoppages were called.

The next day, therefore, I sent out sixty further telegrams to these part-making firms, demanding *their* explanation of the delay.

The replies from these people extended the field to a still wider group! So I sent out another batch of telegrams, some two hundred in all. I would get to the bottom of this matter, and enlarge these bottlenecks, I told myself, even if I had to monopolize all the telegraph lines in England!

By this time the Ministry had heard about the affair and, in addition, some of the heads of the firms con-

## WOUNDED FOR THE SECOND TIME

cerned had become quite irate at the most unusual procedure of telegraphing when the mails were still running! It was not in accordance with Ministry practice at all! *Most* unusual, in fact. Down to my chief came a dozen or more highly-excited gentlemen, demanding to know what it was all about.

I was requested to make an explanation. I carefully told them what I intended to do, and even suggested that it was worth sending out ten thousand telegrams if it would result in a quicker delivery of much-needed shells and in the saving of soldiers' precious lives.

This appeared to be an unanswerable argument, and so, with an undercurrent of muttering here and there concerning "Damned Yankee tricks", it was promised me that something would be done at once. In a very short time indeed gas shells started to roll forward in unexpectedly large quantities.

Another thing I felt proud of was having a hand in a job that had already been started by an English engineer working for the Ministry who, like myself, had had American experience. This was the standardizing of a multitude of small parts intended for shells of different sizes. An amazing economy was effected in time and expense when this new system was put into effect.

\* \* \* \*

The most important thing, however, that happened to me while I was at the Ministry of Munitions was that I met the young lady there with whom I shortly there-

after embarked again on the great adventure of matrimony.

As was the usual British custom, at four o'clock each afternoon everyone stopped work and went to tea. The tea room of the Ministry was in the commandeered Victoria Hotel, on Northumberland Avenue, in which building I happened to have my own office.

The first afternoon I went down to tea, I found the place packed. There was one seat left at a table filled with laughing girls, and this seat I took.

The girls were talking merrily together, and one vivacious, grey-eyed minx, who happened to be sitting next to me, was telling her companions about a visit she had made the previous Sunday to the London Zoo. She was talking about the hippopotamus, and of how she had been permitted with her companion, a member of the Zoological Society, to go right into the animal's cage. Just then a train of thought struck me about a gas shell I was working on, and I paid no more attention until suddenly I heard the young lady remark:

"And it ran right up my arm!"

I thought this a most amazing statement, and turning to her I exclaimed:

"What! The hippopotamus?"

The girls all laughed.

"No, you silly," the young lady retorted, "the squirrel, of course!" The conversation, I found, had switched from the hippo to the squirrels while I was day-dreaming and I had not noticed it.

So started a friendship that shortly afterwards rip-



*Photo by Violet Keene, Toronto*

KATHLEEN STRANGE



WOUNDED FOR THE SECOND TIME

ened into romance. Within a few months I was engaged to be married!

\* \* \* \*

Before leaving England, to return to France once more, I received a telegram informing me that His Majesty, the King, commanded me to appear at Buckingham Palace on a certain day to receive the Military Cross that I had been awarded some time previously.

Going through the Palace Yard, who should I meet again but my friend, Lieutenant Stewart, on his way to receive his own Military Cross and bar.

I must admit that it was with some trepidation that I approached His Majesty. I wondered if he would recognize me as one of the party that had caused him some temporary agitation in France; in fact, that had almost been responsible for sending a gas shell right over on top of him!

I was introduced and made my bow. The King regarded me with a humorous twinkle in his tired eyes.

"Now, let me see," he said. "Were you not one of those officers who thought I'd make a good target for a gas bomb?"

"I was, Your Majesty," I admitted, regretfully. "And we've all been most unhappy about it ever since, I can assure you."

"Tut, tut," the King replied. "Don't worry about it any more. Things like that happen in war time."

The King had a kind and encouraging word, and a



NEVER A DULL MOMENT

cordial handshake for each one. He had a hard job to do, and he did it with fortitude and courage. No wonder he was so beloved!

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### The Battle of Amiens

ON RETURNING to duty in France, I was fortunate in being able to take part in a further number of successful gas discharge operations and, on August 8th, 1918, I was privileged to be present at the famous Battle of Amiens.

This was perhaps the best-planned and best-executed battle of the whole Great War. Certainly it was the best that I had observed. Everything had been arranged with the utmost secrecy. For some time before, news had been bruited around that an attack of considerable proportions would be made by the British on the Belgian front. Much to their disgust, this and that unit, and this and that division, were confidentially informed that they would not be required to take part in the forthcoming big operation *at Arras* but that they would be sent elsewhere to rest or, at the most, to do a few raids.

Our own Gas Unit was ordered to prepare for a small operation on the Amiens front and we felt quite hurt in being passed over for the Arras Battle. The night before the so-called "small raid" was to take place, however, we suddenly learned of the large and secretly-planned battle that was to start at 4.30 the following morning and in which we were to take part. The

much-talked-of Arras Battle was a *ruse-de-guerre* only.

During the night, tanks rumbled into position from many different quarters; there was a slight mist, that for once favoured us and not the enemy, and aeroplanes were busy flying back and forth, the roaring of their engines probably serving to hide from the Germans the noise of the arriving tanks and other battle preparations.

Our gas was discharged on the enemy at 4.10 in the morning, and at 4.20 the heaviest barrage that had ever been fired in the war suddenly fell on the German lines.

A veritable army of tanks now appeared, apparently from nowhere, and began going forward in line, followed by the troops.

As soon as our gas discharge was over, we had nothing further to do. Some of us, however, went forward with the infantry. Hardly a single German shot was fired at us. The enemy had been taken completely by surprise. For the first time in years I saw our men laughing and joking and full of high spirits, like boys on a spree. By noon the whole army had advanced many kilometres and had captured several thousands of German prisoners, many guns and much other booty.

Some ten kilometres or so behind the German lines, we came across a fully-equipped German ambulance train. The entire crew, with the staff of doctors and nurses, had been captured. We found headquarters dugouts where the occupants for the most part had

## THE BATTLE OF AMIENS

been captured or had hastily retreated, leaving their equipment behind.

At one spot we passed a party of German prisoners, carrying one of their companions in a blanket. A member of the carrying party asked me, in English, if I could spare a little water for the wounded man. The man in the blanket was, I saw, a German officer, and when I looked closer, to my surprise I discovered him to be my old friend, Otto Schwartz of Honolulu! He had been badly wounded in the knee but was still conscious.

We shook hands and had a little chat, and I gave him some cigarettes, my whiskey flask and a bottle of water. I also wrote a note, on a page in my message book, and gave it to him to carry to hospital with him. The note read:

"To whom it may concern: Please be kind to this German officer. He was my good friend in Honolulu before the War."

Some of our infantry, when they saw me so friendly with this German prisoner, became quite suspicious, and it was even rumoured, I later learned, that I might be a German spy!

The Battle of Amiens was the start of the great British Advance, an advance that never ceased until the moment of the Armistice itself.

\* \* \* \*

For some time following the Battle of Amiens, our gas force accompanied the infantry on the heels of the

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

enemy, now and again making gas discharges as required.

It was during this advance that I met again my old Klondike friend and partner, Charlie Straker, now a Lieutenant in the Canadian forces.

One day I received orders to call on a Canadian Brigade Headquarters, and there, sitting in the officers' mess, I saw Charlie. I had last seen him, it will be recalled, in the uniform of a private on the platform at Vancouver Station, some three years before. We were delighted to meet each other again and had so much to talk about that we hardly knew where to begin. Charlie, it appeared, after a few months only in the Canadian forces, had been sent to Bexhill, to an Officers' Training Corps, and his promotion to a first lieutenancy had quickly followed. Unfortunately he was leaving in a few hours with his company for the front line.

"Do call on me," he said, "if you are ever in my part of the line again."

"I certainly will," I promised.

A month later I found myself near that part of the line held by Charlie's company. I sent a "signals" message to say that I would be over to see him the next afternoon. Charlie answered back: "Shall be eagerly awaiting you."

Up I went in high spirits. At the Company Headquarters I asked for Lieutenant Straker.

"Sit down," said the Captain, "and take a drink. I'm afraid I've some rather bad news for you. Your friend

## THE BATTLE OF AMIENS

Straker was shot through the heart an hour ago. He'd made special preparations for your visit, and had told us all about you. Poor fellow, he was a splendid officer and was well liked by all of us."

As I sat there, thinking sadly of my friend, it flashed through my mind that I had recently received a letter from another of my old Klondike partners, Alex Aliott, who had gained a commission as an officer in the British Navy. I wondered if I should ever meet *him* again. (I did meet Alex, amazingly enough, quite by accident in the centre of Waterloo Bridge, some time afterwards when I was home on leave, and many a good story he had to tell me of his experiences with the submarine chaser which he was commanding in the North Sea. After the Armistice, Alex had an astonishingly adventurous career in Mexico and in the South Seas, and eventually spent some time with us on our prairie farm in Alberta. Today Alex is tending a lighthouse at Nanoose Bay, B.C.)

\* \* \* \*

Early in October, of that same year, I was instructed to accompany a small force of our Special Brigade to join the American Second Army, to do some gassing for them during the Battle of the Argonne.

We were the first British force, I believe, to work with the American Army in France. We were in that area occupied by the Americans in front of Nancy and behind Metz, under the command of General Bullard. Curiously enough, our rear headquarters was not far

#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

from the British Long Distance Bombing Squadron's Headquarters, where, it will be remembered, I had made special experiments with gas and flame some time before. I visited the Air Force people again and found, to my extreme sorrow, that of all the fine young officers with whom I had been acquainted such a short time before, there was but one left still flying. The rest had nearly all been killed; only a few, alas, had been wounded or taken prisoner.

The Americans, at this time, were moving forward so fast that we had no time to get settled anywhere. Our Gas Unit was expected to put gas over as soon as the Germans offered any steady resistance, but this they did not do. The enemy were apparently completely overwhelmed by the freshness and the eagerness of the American troops.

We had a splendid time with the Americans. Naturally we were put on their list for rations, equipment and so forth, and it was with great delight that our "Tommies" discovered that the rations and equipment issued to the American soldiers were far more generous than the British list.

Each of our men's messes was issued with a steel plate with which to make "hot cakes". Our men, of course, had never used any utensil of this kind before nor even ever heard of hot cakes, and we had to obtain the assistance of an American cook to teach us how the hot cakes were made. Once our lads had sampled the hot cakes, however, they enjoyed them thoroughly and there was a never-satisfied demand for them. Liberally



OUTSIDE BUCKINGHAM PALACE AFTER HAVING RECEIVED THE  
MILITARY CROSS, WITH MRS. STRANGE, AND LIEUTENANT AND  
MRS. R. STEWART



THE DAY BEFORE THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, AT THE ENTRANCE  
TO THE DUGOUT WHICH HOUSED THE FLAME PROJECTOR. THE  
AUTHOR IS SECOND FROM LEFT. LIEUT. STEWART IN FOREGROUND.  
*(Imperial War Museum Photograph. Copyright reserved)*





## THE BATTLE OF AMIENS

buttered, and with American maple syrup poured over them, a "stack of hots" became a regular treat for our "Tommies" from that time forward.

The people back in the United States, it appeared, were particularly generous in sending "comforts" to their soldiers. One of the issues from the Comfort organizations included six tin bath-tubs, which nested one in the other and could be carried around quite conveniently. It was much pleasanter to take a bath in one of these tin tubs than it was to take one in the canvas contraptions used by the British officers, which were really not much better than large canvas hand-basins.

Pyjamas, too, were an occasional issue, and these were more than some of our "Tommies", who had never in their lives slept in anything other than their underwear or their trousers, could understand. The pyjamas were accepted, however, and then promptly done up in parcels and sent home to wives and sweethearts. Safety razors, too, were an issue, but our men could not bring themselves to be so extravagant as to throw the worn blades away. Many of them tried to shave themselves with dull blades, and nicks and cuts became much more frequent than with the old-style straight steel blade razor such as the British soldiers used.

The American Army treated us as guests, and nothing was too good for our boys. In one way, however, we suffered. The British "Tommies" were still on British pay, which was about one-quarter as much a day as the American soldiers received. The French villagers acted in the same way with the Americans as

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

they had done when the Canadians and Australians were resting in the villages; they raised the prices of things to double and treble their proper value. Prices became so outrageously high, in fact, in the American area, that our British lads were no longer able to purchase any "*bing-bong*" (white wine) and "*vin rouge*" (red wine), and the never-ending "*Omelette, Made-moiselle*" and "*café*". Our British soldier's pay certainly never ran to *cognac* any more!

Something worse, however, was to happen yet. The American troops played a fascinating card game for money that our boys had not heard of before. It was called poker.

Very soon after each pay day, it would be found that the "Tommies" had lost their fortnight's pay.

Our war-seasoned troops, however, soon found out one way in which to "get even" with the Americans and to obtain some at least of their money back in kind. Our veteran "Tommies" would tell stories by the hour of their war experiences. One would often see, in a village *estaminet* or restaurant, one British soldier, surrounded by an admiring group of American soldiers, spinning yarns about his desperate and blood-curdling adventures in battles, raids, hand-to-hand encounters and so forth. As long as the stories lasted, the Americans would pay for the story-teller's food and drink!

It may be remembered that soon after the Americans came into the War, their first troops were brigaded with the French and British infantry. Four American

## THE BATTLE OF AMIENS

divisions saw service with the British Armies. This was while the American Army itself was being formed.

The gallantry, the courage, and the good behaviour of the officers and men of these four American divisions was outstanding to a degree, and on all sides, in the British Armies and Corps, with which the Americans worked, one heard nothing but the highest praise for our U.S.A. Allies. These four Divisions were with the American troops with whom we were now quartered, and I think that their officers and men might be said to be more pro-British than any British troops themselves! The Americans had an intense admiration for the British officers, for the British "Tommies" and particularly for British staff work.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

### The Armistice

OUR Special Company was still working with the American Army, which had advanced to a small town named Pont-à-Mousson on the Moselle River, when the Armistice came.

Early in the morning of November 11th, 1918, we received the following message:

“Hostilities will cease on the whole front as from November 11th at eleven o’clock (French time).”

It was signed by Marshal Foch.

This message was accompanied by an order, which stated that the advance was to continue until the very moment of the Armistice. And so the battle went on, just as though no Armistice had been set at all, the American troops slowly advancing, the Germans stubbornly resisting but gradually retiring towards Metz.

At eleven o’clock precisely, all firing suddenly ceased. Then followed a most unearthly silence, such a silence as had been quite unknown on the fighting front for over four years.

There was, strangely enough, no immediate sense of relief or joy. There were no congratulations. Rather, a feeling of complete bewilderment seemed to come

## THE ARMISTICE

over us all. It was several minutes before the first man was bold enough to come out from the cover he had taken during the advance and to stand in the open.

It was a most extraordinary sensation, being able to stand up in full view of the enemy. One almost felt as though something were wrong.

In a few minutes, firing recommenced from both sides, first from the German lines and then from our own. This continued for about fifteen minutes, and at one time it was as fierce as any that had taken place on that particular front.

It was afterwards discovered that this firing was not the result of any wrong orders, or of maliciousness on the part of the soldiers, but merely because the men on both sides were clearing their rifles and guns—and perhaps firing a few extra shells into the air for good measure, just to celebrate the occasion.

An order soon came through for the American troops of all ranks to stand fast until further notice on the line gained at the moment of the Armistice. A French officer, attached to our force as an interpreter remarked, however, that there seemed to be no prohibition against French or British soldiers passing over the line if they so desired.

"Why don't we take a trip into Metz?" he suggested, "and have the distinction of being the first Allied officers to enter that city?"

Several of us were all for the adventure. A car was accordingly secured, and soon we were rolling smoothly along the main Moselle-Metz road.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Less than a kilometre from Pont-à-Mousson, however, we came upon a German advance post. We chatted with the Captain-in-Charge—who spoke English quite well, having been, he explained, the owner of a drapery establishment in Glasgow before the War—and we distributed some cigarettes among the German soldiers, who soon moved the felled trees that barricaded the road. Then we were out on the main road again, heading straight for Metz, and now within the area still occupied by German troops. It gave one a decidedly queer feeling to be driving in German territory in perfect safety.

Metz was a German Corps Headquarters at that time. Curiously enough, very few German soldiers were to be seen on the streets, and those who were paid no attention whatever to the strange car, as it sped along valiantly flying a small British flag. We were astonished to see several French soldiers walking around, dressed in the old 1914 uniform of baggy red trousers and long, ragged blue overcoats. We found out afterwards that these were prisoners of War, whom the Germans had recently released from nearby prison camps and had left to find their own way back to the Allied lines.

Our car was greeted in two different ways by the general populace of Metz. A number of houses had closed their shutters and drawn down their blinds. These we took to be the homes of Germans. Some of the people on the streets, too, evidently Germans or of

## THE ARMISTICE

German extraction, turned their heads away and endeavoured to ignore our presence.

The French people, on the other hand, who since 1870 had been patiently awaiting this day of liberation, rushed up to our car, climbed on to the running boards, and began vigorously shaking our hands and bestowing on us the most fervent embraces. While we were not at all adverse to being kissed by the pretty Alsatian girls, it was somewhat embarrassing to be kissed by the men!

At one spot we saw a crowd of people busily pulling down a large statue of Kaiser Wilhelm seated on a horse. Above the great entrance to the Cathedral was a life-sized statue of a Saint, the very image of the Kaiser, and someone had hung around the neck of this statue a sign, with the words painted on it in large letters: "*Sic transit gloria mundi*". (So pass all earthly glories!)

The French patriots who had surrounded our car proceeded to escort us to the leading hotel in Metz, where the proprietor, a man of French descent, met us in a most cordial manner and himself conducted us to a table of honour at one end of the grand *salle à manger*.

We at once noticed a group of German officers, sitting at a table at the far end of the room. As we entered they rose, saluted us stiffly and bowed. These salutations, of course, we politely returned.

When we were all seated, and had given our orders from the somewhat scanty menu card, the proprietor brought us some bottles of wine, which he appeared to



handle with the utmost respect. We were rather surprised at this, for the bottles showed no particular need for such elaborate care, being quite new and all conspicuously labelled "*vin ordinaire*". We noticed, also, that the Germans were enjoying wine at their table from heavily-encrusted bottles with aged-looking labels.

Seeming to divine our thoughts, the proprietor leaned close and whispered:

"It's all right, *messieurs*! When the German Army came to Metz, we emptied all our old wine into new bottles, and all the new wine into old ones. The Germans do not understand wine, you know. They drink only bottles and labels! This, *mes amis*, is truly old vintage wine of the Moselle that I am offering you to celebrate this *occasion inoubliable*."

During the course of the meal an incident occurred that almost precipitated a minor battle then and there. Our good French interpreter, having imbibed of the fine Moselle wine a trifle too freely, suddenly jumped to his feet and began to sing the "*Marseillaise*". Turning to the Germans, he insisted that they join in!

We tried to quiet our friend, but to no avail. He drew his sword, flourished it, and offered to fight a duel with any one of the Germans who refused to sing.

A member of our party, who spoke German, walked over to the German officers' table, apologized for our friend's behaviour, and suggested that a compromise might be effected, and trouble averted, if the Germans would join in singing the "*Marseillaise*" and then we in

## THE ARMISTICE

turn would immediately follow by joining in with them in the singing of "*Die Wacht am Rhein*".

This the Germans agreed to, and after both sides had somewhat haltingly sung the two national songs, peace was restored and we were able to breathe freely, all the more so when it was discovered that the officer who had caused all the trouble in the meantime had fallen asleep.

After luncheon, one of the German officers strolled over to our table and said, in quite good English:

"I am the Commandant of this town. We didn't expect any of the Allied troops here so soon and are not leaving the city until tonight. If you would care to see our quarters, I should be glad to show you around."

This courteous invitation was accepted and we started out.

"What are in all those large cases?" I asked curiously, as we walked through the German barracks. Dozens of large boxes were piled up in an open shed.

"I'll have one opened up and show you," the German Commandant said, with a smile.

The cases turned out to contain fine German parade helmets, of highly-polished brass, each with an eagle mounted on the top. They had been made especially, the commandant told us, for the Germans' triumphal entry into Paris after they had won the war.

The German Commandant invited us to take a few helmets back with us as souvenirs of the occasion.

"We shan't be needing them for our march into

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Paris now," he remarked, in a wry tone, "and by the time we do," he added, prophetically, "I expect the styles in helmets will have changed!"

The German officers insisted on a little private celebration in their own quarters. There was a significant moment when we all held our glasses of Rhine wine in our hands. We wondered what kind of a toast the Germans would propose, and they were probably wondering the same thing about us. Finally, a toast was proposed by each in almost identical words: the one by the Germans, "To the brave Allied soldiers", and the one by the British, "To the gallant German soldiers", and one voice added a fervent: "May their sacrifices bring peace between us for ever more!" Alas, that in twenty years we should be at war with each other again!

\* \* \* \*

Late that night our party returned to its headquarters at Pont-à-Mousson. The chauffeur of our car was the proud bearer of one of the German souvenir helmets, and thereby hangs an amusing tale.

The following morning, our sergeant-major interviewed me and made an interesting proposal.

"There's a little matter the men wish me to take up with you, sir," he began. "Our men 'ave been taking lessons from them Americans in a new game. Poker it's called, and there's also a game with dice they call craps. The truth is, sir, that it's cost our men about all their pay to learn these new games."

## THE ARMISTICE

"But surely the men aren't complaining?" I asked.  
"They lost their money fairly, I take it?"

"Oh, yes, sir," the sergeant-major quickly replied.  
"The men of this unit are good sportsmen, all right. But they do feel as 'ow they'd like to get even with them Americans, so to speak. It seems, sir, that one of our men, Pioneer Nobby Clark, 'as an idea 'ow it might be done. Your chauffeur, sir, told 'im something about your trip yesterday to Metz, and what you brought back, and it only needs a little 'elp from you, sir, in getting the use of a lorry to go into Metz, to put the 'ole thing through."

"Well, and what is the scheme?" I asked, smiling in spite of myself.

The sergeant-major proceeded to outline it. I agreed to help in putting the plan into effect.

One morning, a few days later, the orderly-sergeant reported to me that an American Colonel was outside in his car.

"'E presents 'is compliments, sir," the man said, "and 'e'd like to see you."

"Give the Colonel my compliments and ask him to come in," I returned.

"'E won't come in, sir," the man replied. "'E—er—'e seems to be a trifle angry, sir."

I went out to see the Colonel.

"What can I do for you, sir?" I asked.

"I have a complaint to make," the American Colonel replied testily. "D'you know that every day for the past week your men have been going into Metz in

trucks, ostensibly to pick up British prisoners released by the Germans, but actually to collect German helmets? They have been selling them to my men at three hundred franc apiece! Hundreds of these helmets have been sold! Yesterday our troops were allowed into Metz for the first time, and now they come back and report that German helmets can be obtained at the German barracks merely for the taking. There are thousands there. They aren't worth one franc apiece. I think, sir, you should make your men return the money at once which they have obviously obtained under false pretences!"

"I hardly think that is possible, Colonel," I said. "I expect most of the money has been spent by now. And, in any case, it seems to me that I have a recollection of your men taking our men's pay in poker and crap games. So far as I know, that money was never returned!"

"Well, I leave it in your hands to do something about it," the American Colonel said, and off he went, still very much upset.

As the American car was driving away, I noticed that one of our men, the sentry on duty outside the orderly room door, appeared to be doubled up in a convulsion of some kind.

"What's wrong with that man?" I demanded of the orderly-sergeant, who was standing nearby. "He seems to be having a fit."

"Oh, 'e's all right, sir," the sergeant-major replied. "'E's just 'aving a larfing fit, that's all."

## THE ARMISTICE

"A laughing fit!" I exclaimed. "What's the man's name?"

"It's Pioneer Nobby Clark, sir."

"What are you laughing for?" I asked Pioneer Clark.

"Beg pardon, sir," Pioneer Clark answered humbly, "but, you see, I 'eard wot that American Colonel said. It fair knocked me all of a 'eap, sir. It was about them 'elmets, sir. That American Colonel was angry, and well 'e might be. You see, sir, I sold 'is orderly an 'elmet for three 'undred franc only last week, and 'is orderly told me afterwards as 'ow 'is Colonel 'ad bought it from 'im for five 'undred!"

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

### Demobilization

THE War was over at last. It was surprising how soon one found oneself forgetting the dirt and sordidness of it all and remembering rather the many gallant gentlemen one had known, all of them possessed with a keen sense of devotion to duty, and who had performed unpleasant and dangerous tasks, not always without fear, but certainly with a determination to die willingly if necessary in the carrying out of orders.

Contrary to general belief, *soldiers were not afraid to die*. They were much more afraid, I found, of being badly wounded, or of being maimed for life. The French had a rather amusing philosophy towards war, that seems to me to express the attitude of all soldiers.

Either you were at the front, or you were not at the front, they would say. If you were not at the front, then you were all right! If you were at the front, either you were under shell fire, or you were not under shell fire. If you were not under shell fire, then you were all right! If you were under shell fire, either you were hit, or you were not hit. If you were not hit, then you were all right! If you were hit, either you were killed or you were sent to hospital. If you were sent to hospital, then you were all right! If you were

## DEMobilization

killed, then you were all right, too, because you had nothing more to worry about!

Looking back now, it seems to me that during all the War I found myself possessed of a curious feeling of detachment towards the enemy. Most certainly I never felt anything resembling prejudice or hatred against him. I seemed to have regarded him solely as a professional soldier, like myself, whose duty to his country it was to kill me if he could; likewise it was my own plain duty to kill him if I could do so. I never lost a single opportunity of causing casualties to the enemy if I could, and I always felt, as I think most soldiers felt, quite elated when we had done, as we called it, a "good show". On the other hand, I had found myself going to considerable pains to be more than ordinarily kind to the German soldiers I came across who had been wounded on the battlefield or whom we had taken prisoner.

Another strange thing I noted in war was that from the moment one struck the communication trenches, leading up to the front line, all sense of fear, and particularly of shrinking from horrible sights, invariably left one. One's feelings became numb, and one became emotionally quite insensible to it all. This deadening of the emotions enabled a soldier to concentrate with full effectiveness on the job to be done. (Many found, of course, that this numbing of the emotions could be successfully brought about, too, by drinking a fair amount of whiskey or rum!) Yet, on leaving the front line behind one, and arriving back in some quiet French



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

village, one's susceptibilities and finer emotions immediately took possession of one again, and one would feel squeamish and faint even at the sight of a dog that had been run over by a car.

\* \* \* \*

And now, before I leave the War of 1914-1918 behind for good, I should like, as a humble member of the Special Brigade, to take the opportunity of paying my respects to this fine little force, the work of which, so far as I know, has up to the present been very little spoken of or written about.

The Special Brigade consisted of between five and six thousand officers and men. It suffered a total of 5,834 casualties. It inflicted on the enemy, however, as estimated from enemy records themselves, between 180,000 and 200,000 casualties—almost 30 enemy casualties to each man of its force. This is an amazing tribute, it seems to me, to the effectiveness of gas as a weapon in war, especially when one considers that it took on the average with all forces, one Allied soldier to cause one casualty to the enemy.

A most excellent and detailed technical account of the work of the Special Brigade has been written by the general officer commanding the Special Brigade, Major-General C. H. Foulkes. This book is published under the title of *Gas! The Story of the Special Brigade*. Another fine story of our gas warfare has been told by Major-General Sir Henry Thullier, who was Director of the Gas Services in G.H.Q., and later Controller of

## DEMobilIZATION

Chemical Warfare at the Ministry of Munitions. His book is entitled *Gas in the Next War*. Both books are extremely interesting and well worth reading.

Foulkes and Thullier were outstanding soldiers—intelligent, keen, gallant, and ever considerate of their officers and men. It was a high privilege to serve under them. It was a privilege, too, to be comrades-in-arms with the officers, N.C.O.s, sappers and pioneers who served with the Special Brigade. They were a brave lot. They came from many different parts of the world. I remember once sitting down to dinner in our mess with ten officers of our "Z" Special Company. We found that we had come to the War, each on his own resources to stand by England's side, from the following countries—Argentina, Ceylon, Hawaii, India, South Africa, Australia, Brazil, the United States and Southern Ireland.

General Foulkes has recorded in his book that this little force received a total of 557 decorations during the War, including one Victoria Cross, and he says that 494 of these decorations were immediate awards.

\* \* \* \*

When, immediately after the Armistice, one saw the German troops marching to the rear—a well-disciplined, fully-equipped Army—many wondered why it was that Germany had been willing to sign the Armistice, for certainly our enemy showed no outward signs of being a routed or badly-beaten force.

Some have considered that the reason for it all was

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

that the Germans had gained knowledge of a new and secret gas, the somewhat accidental discovery of an officer of General Foulkes's staff, which our little force had ready and which had been slated to be used promptly on November 11th, if the Germans had not signed the Armistice.

This gas was the now well-known and much-written-about, but then secret, diphenylamine chlorarsine, called D.M. for short. It was found that one part of it in twenty-five million parts of air would cause a person exposed to it for a few moments to suffer acutely from congestion of the nose and throat and then quickly to become unconscious. This gas would most certainly have been an outstanding success, for the reason that the German gas masks did not offer the slightest protection against it. An ingenious thermo generator had been devised, called the "M" device, for the discharge of this new gas, and it had been planned that hundreds of thousands of these small gas bombs would be set alight with friction lighters by large numbers of men and thrown over towards the enemy immediately before an attack. Our men could follow over because their own gas masks had been fitted with a simple device, which was kept a secret, and which gave effective protection against the new gas.

However, because of the Armistice, this most devastating weapon was not used against the Germans.

\* \* \* \*

I was still in France, but towards the end of

#### DEM OBILIZATI ON

December I obtained leave to go to England, in order that my marriage to Kathleen—which had first been scheduled to take place on Armistice Day—might now take place. We were married on December 23rd, 1918, at a church in Ealing, a suburb of London where Kathleen's parents resided, and we spent our honeymoon in London itself—ten short days, and then I had to return to France.

Now, fortunately, there was no need for worry on anyone's part any more. I must say, however, that this was one of the most difficult periods of the whole War. One had to hang about with little or nothing to do. Discipline among the soldiers, of course, suffered greatly, and officers were obliged to overlook behaviour on the part of the men which before the Armistice would have brought severe punishment.

In the spring of 1919 I heard from the War Office that I could shortly leave for my former home. Records revealed, the War Office said, that my home was in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the British Government, having decided to repatriate, at its own expense, all officers and their families coming to the war from distant parts, my wife and I would travel back to Honolulu free of all cost. In addition, I was to be reimbursed for the cost of my fare and expenses coming over from Honolulu to join the British Army—a gesture which I thought was most generous on the Government's part.

There was some more waiting about for the necessary arrangements to be completed, and then finally one day

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

there came an official notice that "Major H. G. L. Strange, M.C., R.E., and wife", had been allotted accommodations on the Cunard liner, the *Orduna*, and would sail from Liverpool to New York on June 18th, 1919.

The voyage to the United States was pleasant but uneventful.

A rather amusing incident occurred, however, as we passed out of the Customs Office in New York into the large hall adjoining the dock.

With us was an English friend, who had been an officer in the British Navy, and who was visiting the United States for the first time. Suddenly, into the great hall, marching in two ranks with stately stride, came about fifty gorgeously-apparelled figures, evidently some sort of delegation to greet someone arriving on the ship. Their uniforms were bright blue, liberally sprinkled with gold lace, and each one wore a ceremonial sword and a cockaded hat covered with gold braid.

Our young naval friend gasped with astonishment.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "Look at them, will you! Fifty bloody admirals!"

Everyone laughed and someone hastened to tell him that these people were members of one of those secret Orders in which American people so delight. Our friend said he thought he had come to a queer country indeed.

We stayed in New York for three months, and Kathleen became thoroughly American from the moment

## DEMobilization

she first saw the lights of Broadway and ate soft-shelled crabs.

From New York we travelled on to Salt Lake City, where we made many good friends among the Mormons, and learned to like these people very much. Just before leaving Salt Lake City, for the Pacific Coast, I had the honour of being invited to give an address to the famous Bonneville Club. My talk on War and Peace seemed to be well received by the large and enthusiastic audience; so well, in fact, that the morning after the banquet, the President of the Club called on me and quietly placed an envelope in my hands.

"You know," he said to me, "you had about three-quarters of your audience last night converted to the belief that the United States should join the League of Nations. It is our custom to give an honorarium to speakers and you will find a small cheque in this envelope as an expression of our appreciation of your talk."

On opening the envelope I found that I had been presented with the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars. It was, as a matter of fact, the largest amount of money I have ever earned for a speech. I must confess, though, that my good wife soon took possession of the money and I never saw it again!

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### Agricultural Work in Western Canada

FINALLY, close on Christmas of the year 1919, we arrived in San Francisco, California, there to await a ship for Honolulu, my former home.

While I was in this city, however, I was called upon to go before a last Medical Board at the British Consulate. To my consternation, the doctor pronounced me only fifty per cent fit.

"If you want to live," he said, "don't return to a sedentary life in a hot climate. I suggest you go farming, my friend."

Here was a shock indeed. After some thought and discussion, however, we decided to follow the doctor's advice.

Farming, of course, was a completely new venture for both Kathleen and myself. Neither of us had ever lived on a farm in our lives. We knew nothing of farming practices, nor of farming people and their ways. Fortunately we had nothing to *unlearn*: but we did have everything to learn from the very bottom up!

Kathleen was bitterly disappointed at not going to Honolulu to live. I had told her so much about it; how beautiful it all was. I was sad myself, too, at not going back to my old home and to my many friends. It seemed as though I was fated never to be able to settle down.

We sent for my mother and the boys to come to us

#### AGRICULTURAL WORK IN WESTERN CANADA

in San Francisco from Honolulu, and Kathleen was, for the first time, introduced to her ready-made family. My three little sons took to her from the start and she to them, a fact that naturally made me most happy.

Now began somewhat extensive investigations on my part into the matter of finding a farm. Farms in California, however, proved to be far beyond the means at our disposal. I soon found myself travelling further and further north in my efforts to find a suitable place. Finally I found myself in Canada.

My plan of locating a farm was a perhaps rather novel one. I looked for a district where the percentage of mortgage foreclosures was small. I discovered such a district in Central Alberta. Here, at last, I managed to acquire a thousand-acre farm, near the then little-known flag-station of Fenn, and some ten miles from the small coal-mining town and railroad divisional point of Big Valley. Twenty miles to the north was the larger town of Stettler, the centre of a prosperous farming community that extended for many miles around.

The full story of our eleven years of farming in Alberta, and of the trials and tribulations that we experienced there, has been told by my good wife in her book, *With the West in Her Eyes*. Suffice it to say that during the eleven years that we lived on the farm we were occupied chiefly with the production of high quality registered seeds of wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa, timothy, and golf green grasses, and with the raising



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

of pure-bred Record-of-Performance Barred Rock poultry and the English Large Black pig.

The high-light of our seed growing experience came in 1923—three years after our arrival on the farm—when we won the World's Championship for wheat and peas at the Chicago International Hay and Grain Exposition, and high prizes for other grains as well. It was the first time the much-coveted wheat championship had come to our district, and the second time only that it had been held in the Province of Alberta, and so our own neighbours, the people of the Province of Alberta, and indeed of the whole of agricultural Canada, seemed to be quite pleased with our achievement and with us.

Following the winning of the World's Wheat Championship, I appeared to be in considerable demand to join various organizations, both provincial and national. I was also approached by each of three political parties in Alberta—the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Farmers—to stand for them at a forthcoming election. Feeling that I could not afford this luxury, however, I refused.

Finally, I was elected Dominion President of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association, an important national organization comprising some two thousand or so of the best seed growers from one end of Canada to the other. I was the first "dirt farmer" to achieve the honour of being made President since the Association's inception in 1901. (There had been only three Presidents before myself.)

#### AGRICULTURAL WORK IN WESTERN CANADA

Our work on the farm, and with these various organizations, was most interesting and most satisfying, particularly when one felt that one's own modest efforts, combined with those of many others, were helping to bring about an improvement in agriculture, not only in Canada, but perhaps, too, in other parts of the world.

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In 1929 the Canadian Seed Growers' Association held its Annual Convention in Winnipeg. One day, during the course of the Convention, we were entertained at luncheon by the Wheat Pool, and the late Mr. A. J. McPhail was our host.

I sat next to Mr. McPhail, and throughout the meal, and long after it was over, he and I had the most earnest discussion about conditions in the West and about co-operation and the marketing of wheat. This, actually, was the first of several such discussions, and of some correspondence, which I held with Mr. McPhail up to the date of his death in April, 1937. At that first meeting, and at every other meeting thereafter, there were many things about which Mr. McPhail and I whole-heartedly agreed, but there were an equal number of things about which we most violently disagreed. We managed, however, to keep quite good personal friends throughout it all.

The same day that I met Mr. McPhail I met a man who was to change completely the course of my life and send us back to the city to live.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

That night the Winnipeg Grain Exchange tendered a banquet to the seed grower delegates and it fell to my lot, as President of the C.S.G.A., to propose a vote of thanks to our hosts.

I took the opportunity of telling them that, while I felt the Grain Trade had done a great deal for the farmers of the Canadian West, in making facilities available almost everywhere over the prairies for the handling, processing and marketing of their grain, and, through the medium of the "futures" markets and the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, for selling their wheat to the four corners of the earth, yet, it seemed to me, the Grain Trade had been rather negligent in actually assisting farmers to improve the *quality* of their crops, and in otherwise helping to enhance the farmers' welfare as a whole. These things, I said, I felt the Grain Trade might well do.

As the close of the meeting a gentleman tapped me on the shoulder and said:

"Here is my card. If you will call at my office tomorrow morning, I should like to discuss some of the things with you of which you have spoken."

On the card was the name—Mr. A. L. Searle.

The next day I called at the address given and was met by a Mr. Gilchrist, whom I found to be the Vice-President of the Searle Grain Company.

After some conversation, Mr. Gilchrist handed me an envelope.

"Here is a gift from Mr. Searle," he informed me.

#### AGRICULTURAL WORK IN WESTERN CANADA

"Perhaps with this money your Association can do a little more work for the farmers."

I opened the envelope. I had thought that the cheque might be for fifty or perhaps a hundred dollars. To my amazement I found it to be for a very large sum indeed!

"Good heavens!" I gasped. "This is a lot of money! Whatever am I going to do with it?"

"Don't ask me," Mr. Gilchrist replied, with a smile. "You said last night that there was much work to be done in which the Grain Trade could help. Well, Mr. Searle has taken you at your word. Go ahead and do it. At the end of a year we shall be interested to know what you have done."

I immediately consulted with the directors of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association, and we concluded that we had better put the money into a Special Educational Fund. Quite an amount of good work was done with the large sum which Mr. Searle donated; at least, Mr. Searle himself was satisfied to the extent that for several years thereafter he made further large annual donations to the Association.

Even with such an auspicious beginning, however, it was difficult to find men competent and willing to carry on this educational work. Seed growers themselves were, in the main, too busy with their own affairs; I was certainly far too busy myself to undertake very much extra work, and so I was obliged to report to Mr. Searle that the progress of the work was slow.

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

One day Mr. Searle and his associates asked me to come to see them. They had, they said, a new idea.

It was that the Searle Grain Company should set up a special department for agricultural research work, the duty of such a department being solely to compile information that would be useful to farmers, to relay such information as the department acquired to the farmers in the quickest and most effective way, and then to assist them in making practical use of the information gained. In other words, to be somewhat of a middle-man between the scientific agriculturists and the governmental departments of agriculture and the working farmers.

It was proposed that I should organize and direct this work.

"Let me think it over?" I asked. "I'll let you know."

I returned to the farm and talked the matter over with my wife.

We had difficulty in deciding what to do. We had all grown very much attached to the farm and to our life there. We had made many fine friends. If I accepted the position with the Searle Grain Company, it would mean leaving Fenn and going to Winnipeg to live. We did not want to do this at all, and yet, at the same time, it seemed to us that the practical experience I had gained of farming in Western Canada, and the knowledge that I had acquired of the farmers' many problems and needs, had perhaps fitted me somewhat for carrying out the plan of work Mr. Searle had outlined and that his Company was willing to sponsor and

#### AGRICULTURAL WORK IN WESTERN CANADA

to promote. At last I decided to accept the position, and so we packed up once more, said goodbye to the farm and moved to Winnipeg.

I was most agreeably surprised at the one simple instruction that Mr. Searle gave me when I first began my new work. It was the only instruction, as a matter of fact, that I have ever received, although Mr. Searle himself often reminds me of it when I see him.

"The work of your Department," he said, "will be to endeavour to assist the farmers of Western Canada to improve their crops, and in general to help them to enhance their welfare and to improve their standard of living. Under no circumstances are you to utilize your department in an attempt to increase the business of the Company. If any good will should come to our Company from your efforts, it is to be quite incidental and not of your seeking. It is not to be the object of your work."

\* \* \* \*

The work of the Research Department has now gone forward for some ten years, and I have reason to believe that it has been useful; at least, that seems to be the general opinion of Governments, of scientific agriculturists, and of an ever-growing number of farmers.

We have conducted some interesting research and investigational work in several agricultural fields. We have had constructed, for example, and have set up in various parts of the country, several hundreds of rain gauges, in order to find out something about the con-

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

nection between rainfall and yields in different districts in the West. We have tried to keep account of the cost of the things that farmers have to buy, and have published our findings monthly in the form of an Index. We have also set up, throughout the country, many hundreds of Demonstration Plots, of different varieties of grains, so that farmers can see, with their own eyes, how the different varieties perform in the different districts in which they are grown. We have investigated the causes or factors that make the price of wheat rise and fall; and this latter project has been particularly interesting because it has taken us into the study of almost every product in the world that is used as a foodstuff by man, and it has taken us, too, into an investigation of the agriculture of almost every country on earth.

With the invaluable help of our good friend, Dr. L. H. Newman, the Canadian Dominion Cerealists (who, by the way, was mainly responsible for our own start in the seed growing business on the farm) we finally developed in our Research Department what is considered to be an entirely new principle in crop improvement work. It is called The Crop Testing Plan.

In the Crop Testing Plan we test the farmers' crops for trueness-to-variety, and judge them for yield and quality, in the same way that cows are tested for milk production and hens for egg production.

The Plan is founded on the old Chinese proverb, which tells us that "one picture is worth ten thousand words". Instead of merely talking to farmers, and

## AGRICULTURAL WORK IN WESTERN CANADA

telling them that their crops should be improved, we grow a small sample from each one of their fields, and under the guidance of an expert, on a certain day of assemblage, show the farmers in a technical fashion the good and the poor varieties that their crops contain.

The invariable and immediate question by a farmer, who has seen with his own eyes that he has poor quality and poor yielding mixtures in his crop is: "Where can I get some better seed?" We endeavour next to live up to the Biblical injunction, which tells that we must "roast that which has been caught in the hunt". Through the medium of hundreds of elevator agents throughout the country, good seed, obtained from professional seed growers, is made available and distributed to the farmers who have been advised to use it, all without any profit to our Company.

The idea of the Crop Testing Plan is spreading rapidly. Many of the states in the U.S.A. are using it; the Russian Government sent one of its commissars in charge of wheat production over to investigate it; Argentina did likewise; and just before the war between China and Japan, China's agricultural authorities were making enquiries about it and had indicated that they intended to apply its principles to the improvement of their own crops of wheat and rice.

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During the ten years that I have been associated with the Searle Grain Company, one of the world's major agricultural tragedies occurred before my very eyes.



#### NEVER A DULL MOMENT

It was the long series of six or seven years of continuous drought, that extended over a large part of the Canadian prairies, a drought made all the more serious because it coincided with a period of severe depression in agricultural prices, and made perhaps even worse because it came immediately after those golden years for the farmers—from 1920 to 1929—when it seemed as though agriculture had at last come into the state of prosperity it undoubtedly deserves. Alas, during the drought years, most farmers paid bitterly for any rewards they had gained in the preceding decade.

The sufferings and heart breaks endured by once happy farming families in Western Canada have been inconceivable and indescribable—monstrous and cruel might be better words to use—and the difficulties they have faced have only been surpassed by the amazing courage with which they, men and women alike, have steadfastly endured their trials.

The great, widespread drought, however, has broken at last; good rains have fallen in recent years, and fine crops have at last been harvested in most parts, thus confirming the faith of those who said continually that some day the rains would come again, and that when the rains did come the land would once more produce abundantly, just as it had done in former years; confirming, too, the promise of the Bible that “while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest . . . shall not cease”, and that “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose”.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### War Again!

WELL, here is the record of some of the things that have happened to me up to this time.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that in my boyhood my father was continually advising me to stay at home and acquire a good education. My grandfather, on the other hand, persistently advised me to travel and so get rid of prejudices and obtain an education that way!

All my life I feel I have been torn between these two urges, which I suppose I must have inherited, and which have been working at cross-purposes within me. I have not travelled anything like as much as I have wanted to, however, and I have not stayed at home and studied as much as I should like to have done, either. So my whole life has been a sort of compromise and, like all compromises, no doubt neither very good nor very bad.

What has it all done for me, I often ask myself? Have I been able to justify my existence? What have I learnt?

The years that I have spent quietly in one place have given me, I believe, the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the great classics of literature—of reading, marking and learning something of the wisdom of the past as set forth by the old philosophers in their books, and, I hope, of profiting somewhat from

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

their sterling advice. These years have given me, also, the opportunity of knowing and enjoying the delights of family life—the love of wife and of children, and the affection and companionship of friends.

Travel, on the other hand, has given me an intimate knowledge of many of the people about whom I have read, and the places in which they have lived; association with people of other races and religions, in other lands, has helped me to develop a better understanding of them, and has helped, too, to clear away some of my instinctive prejudices, so that I have become, I hope, more tolerant of all human beings, particularly of the people of nations other than my own. Reading and travel combined have taught me to look for the deep and usually hidden principles which govern life's activities, and have taught me also not to be influenced too much by superficial acts and temporary situations.

One thing I can say, however, without any question of doubt, which is that for the most part I have thoroughly enjoyed myself, wherever I have been and whatever I have been doing. I have, so far, lived a happy, busy, and to me at least, an interesting life. There is hardly anything that I have recorded in these pages that I would not do over again, in exactly the same way, if the occasion arose. I have had some depressing moments, of course, but not many, and I have always tried to cast the memory of them from me as quickly as I could.

I have but one complaint to make against the life I have led, and the life I am still hoping to lead, which

## WAR AGAIN

is that it is all too short. When the end comes for me, I shall have had time to read only a small number of the great books I want to read; I shall have had time to visit only a small number of the fascinating places in this world that I should like to go to; I shall have had time to talk with only a small number of the interesting people I should like to meet; and I shall have done only a small part of the work I feel capable of doing and that I would like to do.

\* \* \* \*

As I write these concluding lines, the world is in the midst of another great war, a war that is exceeding in studied and deliberate violence that of any previous war of which I have ever read.

Once again, as in the past, aggressor countries prepared openly and vigorously for "the Day" and, only too sadly, once again the politicians responsible for the defence of our democratic countries, living in a world of illusion and delusion, made no adequate preparation and in consequence, when zero hour struck, these democratic countries were caught utterly unready.

France, for the time being, is gone. But the ancient and gallant spirit of the French people I for one believe is not extinct, and I know that some day France will recover her poise and then will regain her soul.

Britain has been driven to her knees and is fighting against great odds with her usual quiet, methodical and dogged determination. We shall, of course, ultimately win, but because of our unreadiness, only unhappily

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

after a vast expense of precious blood and treasure.

I have already myself been in two wars. I may yet be in the thick of this one. For it seems to me that before this particular holocaust is over, all of us who have had actual battle experience, besides helping, as we are, to train new soldiers, may yet be needed in the field, and so may again be given the high privilege of going into battle itself.

I love England dearly, and number myself among that great company who would gladly give their lives if it would help England and the British people to survive.

In the course of my agricultural work I have had occasion to study and to compile a record of the wars that have taken place in the world during the past five hundred and thirty-eight years. (This particular period having been chosen because we had already compiled wheat prices for that time.) I found that in all those five hundred odd years the world has been at complete peace for a total of only fifty-one years; that most European countries, including Great Britain herself, have been at war for more than half the entire time; and that, strangely enough, the most peaceful country of all, by far, has been China, a country we presume to call barbarian!

I have tried to examine some of the causes of these many wars, but I find that it is far more difficult to come to a conclusion about these causes than it is to learn the actual details of the fighting—the tactics, the strategies, the results, and so forth. There does seem,

## WAR AGAIN

however, to be a common thread running through all the factors that have brought about the various conflicts, and that common thread is, in the main, woven of a series of economic causes that combine to make one important main strand, i.e., *human suffering*.

Human nature is such, I believe, that while people are quite willing to endure suffering, provided others around them are suffering too, they soon become discontented if they have to suffer alone, and particularly if others visible to them, or of whom they have knowledge, are living at a much higher standard. Mr. J. M. Keynes warned the makers of the Versailles Treaty, in 1919, that "hungry people do not always lie down and die peacefully," and it is my own conviction that men of any race or creed are unable to retain their poise and their sanity for long if they have to face the reproachful eyes of their womenfolk, and if they have to listen to the whimpering of their children from want, and that, sooner or later, if these sad conditions persist, men will fight, either against the wealthier people in their own country or, if the misery is widespread, against the people in some other country more fortunate than their own. This factor of human suffering is, I consider, the true basic cause, not only of revolts within countries, but also of most of the wars that have occurred between peoples of different countries in this world.

My own experience of life teaches me that in order to avoid revolts, revolutions, vicious strikes and great wars between countries, then those with accrued

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

wealth must be willing, to a reasonable extent at any rate, *to share* with others; and particularly that nations rich in natural resources must be willing to share those resources, with which God has enriched their lands, with other countries whose lands can supply neither sufficient food nor sufficient raw materials for providing adequate clothing and shelter for their people. I do not by this mean that surplus wealth or resources must be given away *free*; only that they should be exchanged, on reasonable terms, for the goods, products and services that other people are able to produce, and so are able to give in exchange as payment.

That it will be necessary to set up, after this present war is over, a League of Nations that will have armed force behind it, I for one do not believe. It will merely be necessary, I feel, to *remove the causes* that make men so discontented that they develop an uncontrollable urge to fight.

I do think, however, that we should set up an International Court of Trained Thinkers, composed of economists, historians and philosophers—a Court that would be completely free from any political control or influence; that would examine carefully any important legislation proposed by any country and would give its opinion as to whether such legislation, if put into force, would affect disadvantageously, to the point of causing acute suffering, masses of people who lived in other parts of the world.

In short, that this Court of Trained Thinkers should point out *the ultimate consequences* of any proposed

## WAR AGAIN

national policies and acts before the acts became laws.

It would be important too, I believe, that these Thinkers, as a body, should report their findings and opinions, not only to the various Governments involved, but more particularly to the people themselves of the different countries concerned, for I myself have implicit faith in the fairness and decency and good judgment of the mass of the common people whenever all the available facts are impartially presented to them, particularly if such people can be kept away from the vicious influence of skilled demagogues.

My contact with the common people of many different nations, races, colours and creeds, convinces me that most of the people of any country are innately decent and kind-hearted, and that none of them seek deliberately to harm others; rather, on the contrary, that they take a keen delight in trying to help others. The desires and needs of the mass of people in the world are simple and few. In the main they are, I have found, merely for sufficient food and clothing for their families, for a modest place that will keep out the rigours of the weather and which they can call home, and for employment that will enable them to earn sufficient to pay for these modest things so that they will not feel themselves objects of charity.

Can these simple needs and desires be satisfied? The answer, I believe, unquestionably is yes.

The world today, I estimate, possesses enough available—not potential—but actually available or easily producible foodstuffs and raw materials for clothing



## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

and shelter to provide modestly for every family in existence. Each family, I find too, can offer in exchange for what it needs something that others are anxious to obtain.

No great plans are needed to bring about these exchanges. Merchants are in sufficient number and of sufficient skill and training to effect them. There are ample railroads and ships to transport the goods and commodities from one country to another and from one place to another. There is no lack of money to act as a medium of exchange. Why, then, it might well be asked, are these helpful exchanges not even now taking place in the volume they should?

For a very simple reason. It is that the Governments of nations—the rulers and the politicians—place artificial and man-made hindrances and restrictions in the way of the merchants' activities, and so, although unconsciously in most cases, the Governments curtail international trade. Governmental tariffs stop the goods from other countries coming over their own frontiers and thereby automatically stop the surplus export products of their own countries from going out, and only too often, in consequence, those living abroad, who need foodstuffs and other materials, suffer and sometimes die from the want of essential things.

Can a lasting Peace be brought about in this world?

I myself think that it can be. But first of all we must reinstate, I believe, at least in our international relations, that much misunderstood and often jibed-

at policy—which I consider has always contained the kernel of peace and happiness for the world, and which for the hundred years between 1814 and 1914 did bring peace and social advancement—the so-called economic policy of "*laissez faire*", meaning simply that Governments must not interfere with the free flow between nations of foodstuffs, goods, commodities and services, of surplus capital and of surplus people. And meaning too that some today who are living in preferred positions, created artificially by the very restrictions to trade that have brought our troubles about and who in consequence enjoy a monopoly of the home markets thus artificially created, will have to make some sacrifices. It may be we shall *all* of us have to make sacrifices—give up some small amount of our present material welfare so that suffering and hungry people in other and less fortunate countries may at least have sufficient to eat, and be moderately well-clothed and sheltered.

Will people be willing to make these necessary sacrifices?

It is difficult to answer this, for my own experience of people in general leads me to the conclusion that while in order to have the Peace which we talk so much about, and which we say we so ardently desire, almost all of us would be willing to sacrifice most of our principles and, with perhaps greater reluctance, many of our prejudices, yet hardly any of us, I fear, would be willing to give up very much of

## NEVER A DULL MOMENT

our present standard of living or existing material welfare, even for the sake of Peace.

And so it seems to me that what is really required in the world today is something of *a complete change of heart*; a willingness to extend the same inherent kindliness and good will, which we do extend generously to those in trouble who live *near* to us, to those who are suffering and in need *out of our sight*, including those who live beyond the seas.

In short, that the white people of the world will learn to have something of that same sweet generosity, that same love for others that is possessed in such abundance and that is actually practised day by day by the Polynesians and certain other native races; such kindliness of heart and love for others as was possessed by those ancient natives of the Caribbean Islands, of whom Columbus wrote in 1493: "... they are also without weapons . . . they are of simple manners and trustworthy, and very liberal with everything they have, refusing no one who asks for anything they may possess, and even themselves inviting us to ask for things. They show greater love for all others than for themselves . . . "

"On earth Peace, good will toward men" has ever been the hope of the Christian world, but I fear myself that "Peace on Earth" will only come when Christian people themselves actually first practise "Good will toward men" in their own daily lives. I am quite convinced, however, that if the inherent good will,

## WAR AGAIN

which undoubtedly does exist in the hearts of all human beings, could be permitted to flow in a great tide throughout the world, that then certainly "Peace on Earth" would soon be with us all.





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